

# **InnoTek VirtualBox<sup>®</sup> User Manual**

**Version 1.3.3 Edition**

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# **InnoTek VirtualBox<sup>®</sup> User Manual**

InnoTek Systemberatung GmbH

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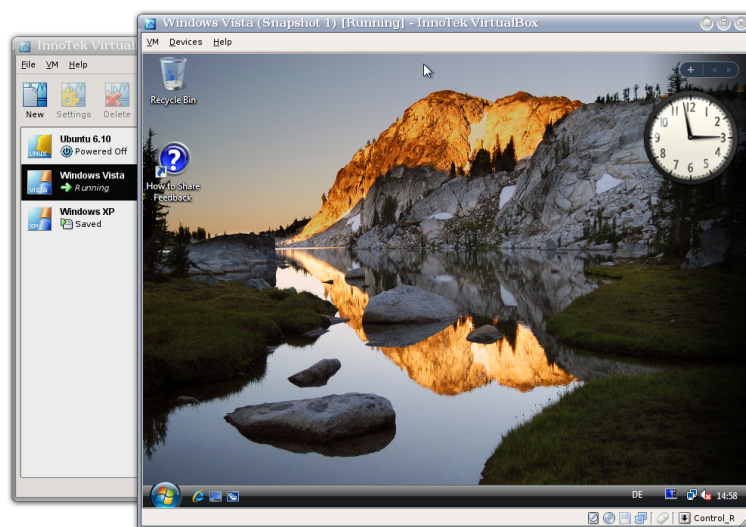
# Chapter 1. Introduction

InnoTek VirtualBox is a family of virtual machine products targeting desktop computers, enterprise servers and embedded systems. Due to its modular architecture, VirtualBox can be deployed in any environment where x86<sup>1</sup> systems are to be virtualized on x86 systems.

## 1.1. Virtualization basics

VirtualBox allows you to run unmodified operating systems -- including all of the software that is installed on them -- directly in a special environment on top of your existing operating system. This environment, called a "virtual machine", is created by the virtualization software. The physical computer is then usually called the "host", while the virtual machine is often called a "guest".

The following image shows you how VirtualBox, on a Linux host, is running Windows Vista as guest operating system in a virtual machine (displayed in a window on the host):



VirtualBox allows most of the guest code to run unmodified, directly on the host computer, and the guest operating system "thinks" it's running on real machine. In the background, however, VirtualBox intercepts certain operations that the guest performs to make sure that the guest can cooperate with other programs on the host.

The techniques and features that VirtualBox provides are useful for several scenarios:

- **Operating system support.** With VirtualBox, one can run software written for one operating system on another (say, Windows software on Linux) without having to reboot. You can even install in a virtual machine an old operating system such as DOS or OS/2 if your real computer's hardware is no longer supported.
- **Infrastructure consolidation.** The full performance provided by today's powerful hardware is only rarely really needed, and typical servers have an average load of only a fraction of their theoretical power. So, instead of running many such physical computers that are only partially used, one can pack many virtual machines onto a few powerful hosts and balance the loads between them. This can save a lot of hardware expenses.

VirtualBox is unique in the virtualization market in that it can run virtual machines as mere servers for the Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP), with full client USB support. This allows for consolidating the desktop machines in an enterprise on just a few RDP servers, while the actual cli-

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<sup>1</sup>The term "x86" refers to both 32bit and 64bit CPUs from AMD and Intel as well as compatible CPUs from other vendors.

ents will only have to be able to display RDP data any more.

- **Testing and disaster recovery.** Once installed, a virtual box and its virtual hard disk can be considered a "container" that can be arbitrarily frozen, woken up, copied, backed up, and transported between hosts. On top of that, with the use of another VirtualBox feature called "snapshots", one can save a particular state of a virtual machine and revert back to that state, if necessary. This way, one can freely experiment with a computing environment. If something goes wrong (e.g. after installing misbehaving software or infecting the guest with a virus), one can easily switch back to a previous snapshot and avoid the need of frequent backups and restores.

When dealing with virtualization (and also for understanding the following chapters of this documentation), it helps to acquaint oneself with a bit of crucial terminology, especially the following terms:

Host operating system (host OS).	The operating system of the physical computer where VirtualBox is installed. Also, the host operating system determines which version of VirtualBox is required: VirtualBox for Windows or VirtualBox for Linux (see Section 1.3.1, "Supported host operating systems" for further information).
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## Note

Even though VirtualBox for Windows and VirtualBox for Linux are usually discussed together in this document, there may be platform-specific differences which we will point out where appropriate.

Guest operating system (guest OS).	The operating system that is running inside the virtual machine. Theoretically, VirtualBox can run any x86 operating system (DOS, Windows, OS/2, FreeBSD, OpenBSD <sup>2</sup> ), but to achieve near-native performance of the guest code on your machine, we had to go through a lot of optimizations that are specific to certain operating systems. So while your favorite operating system <i>may</i> run as a guest, we officially support and optimize for a select few (which, however, include the most common ones).
------------------------------------	--

Virtual machine (VM).	When running, a VM is the special environment that VirtualBox creates for your guest operating system. So, in other words, you run your guest operating system "in" a VM. Normally, a VM will be shown as a window on your computer's desktop, but depending on which of the various frontends of VirtualBox you use, it can be displayed in full-screen mode or remotely by use of the Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP).
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With VirtualBox, we also use the term "virtual machine" in a more abstract way. VirtualBox internally thinks of a VM as a set of parameters that determine its operation. These settings can be seen in the VirtualBox graphical user interface and via the VBoxManage program; see Section 6.1, "VBoxManage, the VirtualBox command line interface". They include hardware settings (how much memory the VM should have, what hard disks VirtualBox should virtualize through which container files, what CD-ROMs are mounted etc.) as well as state information (whether the VM is currently running, saved, its snapshots etc.).

In other words, a VM is also what you can see in its settings dialog.

Guest Additions.	With "Guest Additions", we describe special software packages that are shipped with VirtualBox. Even though they are part of VirtualBox, they are designed to be installed <i>inside</i> a VM to im-
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<sup>2</sup>See Section 1.3.2, "Supported guest operating systems" for further information.



prove performance of the guest OS and to add extra features. This is described in detail in Chapter 4, *The VirtualBox Guest Additions*.

## 1.2. Features overview

Here's a brief outline of VirtualBox's main features:

- **Clean architecture; unprecedented modularity.** VirtualBox has an extremely modular design with well-defined internal programming interfaces and a clean design that separates client and server code. This makes it easy to control it from several interfaces at once: for example, you can start a VM simply by clicking on a button in the VirtualBox main program and then control that machine from the command line, or even remotely.

Due to its modular architecture, VirtualBox can also expose its full functionality and configurability through a comprehensive **software development kit (SDK)**. Based on the standard technology COM (XPCOM on Linux), this Application Programming Interface (API) offers a comfortable way of integrating VirtualBox with other software systems. Internally, VirtualBox uses its own public API, which guarantees that every aspect of the product is accessible to external customers as well and all interfaces are well tested.

- **Easy portability.** VirtualBox already runs on Windows 2000, Windows XP and Windows Server 2003 as well as on all major Linux distributions from Red Hat, Novell and others. In addition, a version for use on embedded  $\mu$ kernel systems is available. Versions for 64-bit host operating systems and for Mac OS X will be available soon.
- **Guest Additions for Windows and Linux.** The VirtualBox Guest Additions are packages which can be installed in Windows or Linux guest systems to improve their performance and to provide additional integration and communication with the host system.<sup>3</sup> Among others, the Guest Additions offer you the following features:
  - **Arbitrary screen resolutions (host-controlled).** In guest systems that support it (currently Windows guests), you can change the guest resolution simply by resizing the virtual machine window in the host system.
  - **Arbitrary screen resolutions (guest-controlled).** The VirtualBox Guest Additions can handle arbitrary screen resolutions. Even for guest operating systems for which no Additions have been written yet, VirtualBox will offer custom VESA resolutions.
- **Client/server design, XML configuration store.** VirtualBox stores all its configuration in XML files: one XML document for global settings and a XML file per virtual machine. This allows you to transport VM definitions between the different frontends and even across host computers.
- **Great hardware support.** Among others, VirtualBox supports:
  - **Full ACPI support.** The Advanced Configuration and Power Interface (ACPI) is fully supported by VirtualBox. This eases cloning of PC images from real machines or 3rd party virtual machines into VirtualBox. With its unique **ACPI power status support**, VirtualBox can even report to ACPI-aware guest operating systems the power status of the host. For mobile systems running on battery, the guest can thus enable energy saving and notify the user of the remaining power (e.g. in fullscreen modes).
  - **I/O APIC support.** VirtualBox virtualizes an Input/Output Advanced Programmable Interrupt Controller (I/O APIC) which is found in many modern PC systems. This eases cloning of PC images from real machines or 3rd party virtual machines into VirtualBox.
  - **USB device support.** VirtualBox implements a virtual USB controller and allows you to connect arbitrary USB devices to your virtual machines without having to install device-specific drivers on the host. USB support is not limited to certain device categories.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See Chapter 4, *The VirtualBox Guest Additions*.

<sup>4</sup>See Section 5.1.6.1, "USB Settings".

times that of a physical screen, allowing them to be spread over a large number of screens attached to the host system.

- **Built-in iSCSI support.** This unique feature allows you to connect a virtual machine directly to an iSCSI storage server without going through the host system. The VM accesses the iSCSI target directly without the extra overhead that is required for virtualizing hard disks in container files.<sup>5</sup>
- **PXE Network boot.** The integrated virtual network cards of VirtualBox fully support remote booting via the Preboot Execution Environment (PXE).
- **Multigeneration snapshots.** VirtualBox can save successive snapshots of the state of the virtual machine. You can revert the virtual machine to the state of any of the snapshots.<sup>6</sup>
- **RDP remote access.** You can run any virtual machine in a special VirtualBox program that acts as a server for the Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP). With this unique feature, VirtualBox provides high performance remote access to any virtual machine. A custom RDP server has been built directly into the virtualization layer and offers unprecedented performance and feature richness.<sup>7</sup>

On top of this special capacity, VirtualBox offers you more unique features:

- **Extensible RDP authentication.** VirtualBox already supports Winlogon on Windows and PAM on Linux for RDP authentication. In addition, it includes an easy-to-use SDK which allows you to create arbitrary interfaces for other methods of authentication.<sup>8</sup>
- **USB over RDP.** Via RDP virtual channel support, VirtualBox also allows you to connect arbitrary USB devices locally to a virtual machine which is running remotely on a VirtualBox RDP server.<sup>9</sup>
- **Folder sharing.** VirtualBox folder sharing lets you access files from the host system inside guests. Shared folders can be set up for all virtual machines, or for a single VM. Temporary shared folders may also be set up while a VM is running.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.3. Operating system support

### 1.3.1. Supported host operating systems

Currently, VirtualBox is available for the following **Windows** 32-bit operating systems:

- Windows 2000, service pack 3 and higher
- Windows XP, all service packs
- Windows Server 2003

and for the following **Linux** 32-bit systems:

- Debian GNU/Linux 3.1 ("sarge") and "etch"
- Fedora Core 4 and 5
- Gentoo Linux

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<sup>5</sup>See Section 5.2.2, "iSCSI servers".

<sup>6</sup>See Section 3.4.4, "Snapshots".

<sup>7</sup>See Section 5.5, "Remote Desktop Support (VRDP)".

<sup>8</sup>See Section 8.3, "VRDP Authentication".

<sup>9</sup>See Section 5.5.2, "Remote USB".

<sup>10</sup>See Section 5.4, "Folder Sharing".

- Redhat Enterprise Linux 3 and 4
- SUSE Linux 9 and 10
- Ubuntu 5.10 ("Breezy Badger"), 6.06 ("Dapper Drake"), 6.10 ("Edgy Eft")

It should be possible to use VirtualBox on most Linux 2.4 and Linux 2.6 based systems using either the VirtualBox installer or by doing a manual installation; see Section 2.2, "Installing on Linux hosts".

VirtualBox is written to be extremely modular and portable. If you are interested in using VirtualBox on a different system, please contact us to discuss adding support. Ports to 64-bit Windows and Linux as well as Mac OS X are already underway.

### 1.3.2. Supported guest operating systems

While VirtualBox is designed to provide a generic virtualization environment for x86 systems, our focus is to optimize the product's performance for a select list of guest systems. The following table provides an overview of current support:

Operating system	Support status
Windows NT 4.0	All versions/editions and service packs are fully supported. Guest Additions are available with limited feature set.
Windows 2000	All versions/editions and service packs are fully supported. Guest Additions are available.
Windows XP	All versions/editions and service packs are fully supported. Guest Additions are available.
Windows Server 2003	All versions/editions and service packs are fully supported. Guest Additions are available.
DOS / Windows 3.x	Limited testing has been performed. Use beyond legacy installation mechanisms not recommended.
Linux 2.4	Limited support.
Linux 2.6	Use of kernel 2.6.13 or higher is recommended for better performance. However, 2.6.18 introduced a bug that disturbs virtualization; if you must use a kernel > 2.6.17, we advise to use 2.6.19 or later. Guest Additions are available.
OpenBSD	Versions 3.7 and 3.8 are supported.

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## Chapter 2. Installation

As installation of VirtualBox varies depending on your host operating system, we provide installation instructions in two separate chapters for Windows and Linux, respectively.

### 2.1. Installing on Windows hosts

#### 2.1.1. Prerequisites

For the various versions of Windows that we support as host operating systems, please refer to Section 1.3.1, “Supported host operating systems”.

In addition, Windows Installer 1.1 or higher must be present on your system. This should be the case if you have all recent Windows updates installed.

#### 2.1.2. Performing the installation

The VirtualBox installation can be started

- either by double-clicking on its Microsoft Installer archive (MSI file)
- or by entering

```
msiexec /i VirtualBox.msi
```

on the command line.

In either case, this will display the installation welcome dialog and allow you to choose where to install VirtualBox to and which components to install. In addition to the VirtualBox application, the following components are available:

USB support	This package contains special drivers for your Windows host that VirtualBox requires to fully support USB devices inside your virtual machines.
Networking	This package contains extra networking drivers for your Windows host that VirtualBox needs to support Host Interface Networking (to make your VM's virtual network cards accessible from other machines on your physical network).

Depending on your Windows configuration, you may see warnings about "unsigned drivers" or similar. Please select "Continue" on these warnings as otherwise VirtualBox might not function correctly after installation.

The installer will create a "VirtualBox" group in the programs startup folder which allows you to launch the application and access its documentation.

#### 2.1.3. Uninstallation

As we use the Microsoft Installer, VirtualBox can be safely uninstalled at any time by choosing the program entry in the "Add/Remove Programs" applet in the Windows Control Panel.

#### 2.1.4. Unattended installation

Unattended installations can be performed using the standard MSI support.

## 2.2. Installing on Linux hosts

### 2.2.1. Prerequisites

For the various versions of Linux that we support as host operating systems, please refer to Section 1.3.1, “Supported host operating systems”.

In any case, the following packages must be installed on your Linux system:

- Qt 3.3.5 or higher;
- SDL 1.2.7 or higher (this graphics library is typically called `libsdl` or similar).

### 2.2.2. Support for external kernel modules

VirtualBox uses a special kernel module to perform physical memory allocation and to gain control of the processor for guest system execution. Without this kernel module, you will still be able to work with Virtual Machines in the configuration interface, but you will not be able to start any virtual machines.

To be able to install this kernel module, you will have to prepare your system for building external kernel modules. Unfortunately, this process varies greatly from system to system, so we can only describe what to do for a few common cases.

- If you have already built your own kernel, `/usr/src/linux` points to your kernel sources, and you have not removed the files created during the build process, then your system will already be correctly set up and installation as described below should proceed properly.
- Some Linux distributions can be set up simply by installing a package:
  - the `linux-headers` package in newer Debian and Ubuntu releases
  - `kernel-headers` in older Debian and Ubuntu releases
  - `kernel-devel` in Fedora and Redhat
  - `kernel-source` and `kernel-syms` in SUSE Linux
- Alternatively, the following should work on most systems:
  1. Install the sources for your Linux kernel to `/usr/src/linux`. Change to that directory.
  2. For kernels 2.6.0 and above, run

```
make defconfig
```

as root. For kernels 2.4.0 and above, run

```
make oldconfig
```

instead and press <Enter> to accept the defaults for any questions you are asked.

3. Finally, if you are using kernel 2.6.0 or above, you should run

```
make prepare
make scripts
```

In order to use VirtualBox's USB support, the user account under which you intend to run VirtualBox must have read and write access to the USB filesystem (`usbfs`). For Host Interface Networking<sup>1</sup>, this user will also need access to `/dev/net/tun`.

### 2.2.3. Performing the installation

VirtualBox comes with a shell script installer that performs the following steps:

- unpacks the application files to a target directory of choice;<sup>2</sup>
- builds the VirtualBox kernel module (`vboxdrv`) and installs it;
- adds an init script to start the VirtualBox kernel module (`/etc/init.d/vboxdrv`);
- creates a new system group called `vboxusers`;
- creates symbolic links to `VirtualBox`, `VBoxSDL` and `VBoxManage` in `/usr/bin`;
- creates a udev description file<sup>3</sup> if udev is present, which sets the module owner to the group `vboxusers`;
- remembers its own installation directory by writing it to `/etc/vbox/vbox.cfg`.

The installer must be executed as root with either `install` or `uninstall` as the first parameter. If you want to use a directory other than the default installation directory, add the desired path as an extra parameter:

```
sudo ./VirtualBox.run install /opt/innotek/VirtualBox
```

Or if you do not have the "sudo" command available, run the following as root instead:

```
./VirtualBox.run install /opt/innotek/VirtualBox
```

If any users on your system should be able to access host USB devices from within VirtualBox guests, you should add them to the appropriate user group that your distribution uses for USB access, e.g. `usb` or `usbusers`.

#### 2.2.3.1. Performing a manual installation

If, for any reason, you cannot use the shell script installer described previously, you can also perform a manual installation. Invoke the installer like this:

```
./VirtualBox.run --target ~/vboxinstall
```

This will unpack all the files needed for installation in the directory `vboxinstall`. The VirtualBox application files are contained in `VirtualBox.tar.bz2` which you can unpack to any directory on your system. For example:

```
sudo mkdir /opt/VirtualBox
sudo tar jxf ~/vboxinstall -C /opt/VirtualBox
```

or as root:

```
mkdir /opt/VirtualBox
tar jxf ~/vboxinstall -C /opt/VirtualBox
```

The sources for VirtualBox's kernel module are provided in the `src` directory. To build the module, change to the directory and issue

<sup>1</sup>See Section 5.3.3, "Host Interface Networking".

<sup>2</sup>The default is `/opt/VirtualBox-1.3.3`.

<sup>3</sup>`/etc/udev/60-vboxdrv.rules`.

```
make
```

If everything builds correctly, issue the following command to install the module to the appropriate module directory:

```
sudo make install
```

In case you do not have sudo, switch the user account to root and perform

```
make install
```

The VirtualBox kernel module needs a device node to operate. The above make command will tell you how to create the device node, depending on your Linux system. The procedure is slightly different for a classical Linux setup with a `/dev` directory, a system with the now deprecated `devfs` and a modern Linux system with `udev`.

On certain Linux distributions, you might experience difficulties building the module. You will have to analyze the error messages from the build system to diagnose the cause of the problems. In general, make sure that the correct Linux kernel sources are used for the build process.

Note that the user who is going to run VirtualBox needs read and write permission on the VirtualBox kernel module device node `/dev/vboxdrv`. You can either define a `vboxusers` group by entering

```
groupadd vboxusers
chgrp vboxusers /dev/vboxdrv
chmod 660 /dev/vboxdrv
```

or, alternatively, simply give all users access (insecure, not recommended!)

```
chmod 666 /dev/vboxdrv
```

You should also add any users who will be allowed to use host USB devices in VirtualBox guests to the appropriate USB users group for your distribution. This group is often called `usb` or `usbusers`.

Next, you will have to install the system initialization script for the kernel module:

```
cp /opt/VirtualBox/vboxdrv.sh /etc/init.d/vboxdrv
```

(assuming you installed VirtualBox to the `/opt/VirtualBox` directory) and activate the initialization script using the right method for your distribution. You should create VirtualBox's configuration file:

```
mkdir /etc/vbox
echo INSTALL_DIR=/opt/VirtualBox > /etc/vbox/vbox.cfg
```

and, for convenience, create the following symbolic links:

```
ln -sf /opt/VirtualBox/VBox.sh /usr/bin/VirtualBox
ln -sf /opt/VirtualBox/VBox.sh /usr/bin/VBoxSVC
ln -sf /opt/VirtualBox/VBox.sh /usr/bin/VBoxManage
```

### 2.2.3.2. Updating and uninstalling VirtualBox

Before updating or uninstalling VirtualBox, you must terminate any virtual machines which are currently running and exit the VirtualBox or VBoxSVC applications. To update VirtualBox, simply run the installer of the updated version. To uninstall VirtualBox, invoke the installer like this:

```
sudo ./VirtualBox.run uninstall
```

or as root

```
./VirtualBox.run uninstall
```

To manually uninstall VirtualBox, simply undo the steps in the manual installation in reverse order.

## 2.2.4. Starting VirtualBox on Linux

To start the VirtualBox graphical user interface, simply start the VirtualBox program. To start the command line management interface for virtual machines, start VBoxManage. To start a single virtual machine from the command line, start VBoxSDL. The following chapters explain how to use these applications.

The following detailed instructions should only be of interest if you wish to execute VirtualBox without installing it first. You should start by compiling the `vboxdrv` kernel module (see above) and inserting it into the Linux kernel. VirtualBox consists of a service daemon (`VBoxSVC`) and several application programs. As a result, prior to starting one of the VirtualBox application programs, the service daemon must be started:

```
export LD_LIBRARY_PATH=. ./VBoxSVC showvminfo "Windows XP"
```

All VirtualBox applications will communicate with the daemon through Unix local domain sockets. There can be multiple daemon instances under different user accounts and applications can only communicate with the daemon running under the user account as the application. The local domain socket resides in your system's directory for temporary files<sup>4</sup>. In case of communication problems or server startup problems, you may try to remove this directory.

All VirtualBox applications require the VirtualBox directory to be in the library path:

```
export LD_LIBRARY_PATH=. ./VBoxManage showvminfo "Windows XP"
```

Normally you will want to start one of VirtualBox, VBoxSDL or VBoxManage.

---

<sup>4</sup>Below `/tmp/.vbox-<username>-ipc`.



---

## Chapter 3. Starting out with VirtualBox

As already mentioned in Section 1.1, “Virtualization basics”, VirtualBox allows you to run each of your guest operating systems on its own virtual computer system. The guest system will run in its virtual machine (VM) as if it were installed on a real computer, according to the parameters of the virtual system you have created for it. All software running on the guest system does so as it would on a real machine.

You have considerable latitude in deciding what virtual hardware will be provided to the guest. The virtual hardware can be used for communicating with the host system or with other guests. For instance, if you provide VirtualBox with the image of a CD-ROM in an ISO file, VirtualBox can present this image to a guest system as if it were a physical CD-ROM. Similarly, you can give a guest system access to the real network via its virtual network card, and, if you choose, give the host system, other guests, or computers on the internet access to the guest system.

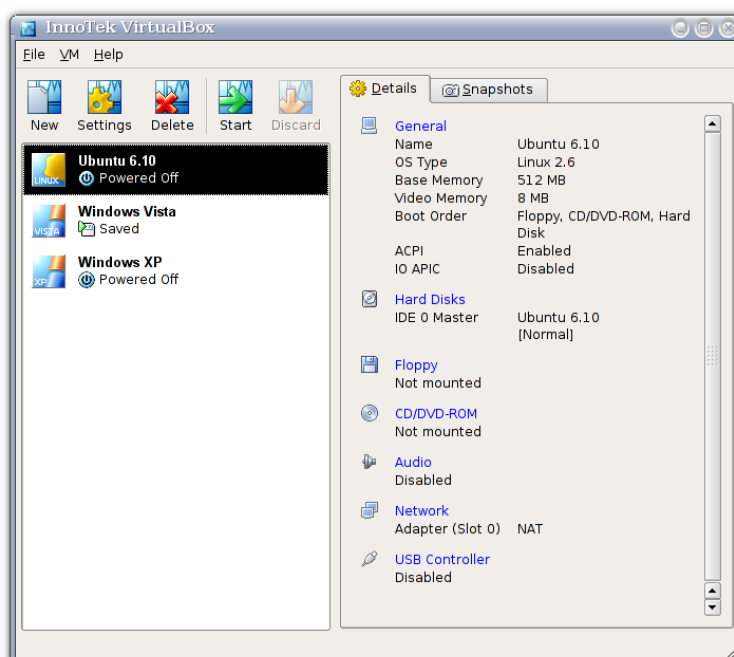
VirtualBox comes with many advanced interfaces, which will be described later in this manual:

- Section 6.1, “VBoxManage, the VirtualBox command line interface” explains how to use create, configure, and control virtual machines completely from the command line.
- Section 6.2, “VBoxSDL, the full-screen interface” explains how to run a single VM at a time with a reduced graphical interface.
- Section 6.3, “VBoxVRDP, the headless VRDP server” shows how to run virtual machines remotely.

The following introductory sections, however, describe VirtualBox, the graphical user interface, which is the simplest way to unleash the power of VirtualBox.

### 3.1. Starting the graphical user interface

After installing VirtualBox as described in Chapter 2, *Installation*, on Windows, you can find the graphical user interface in the “Programs” menu (under the “VirtualBox” group); on Linux, you can type `VirtualBox` on the command line. Then, a window like the following should come up:



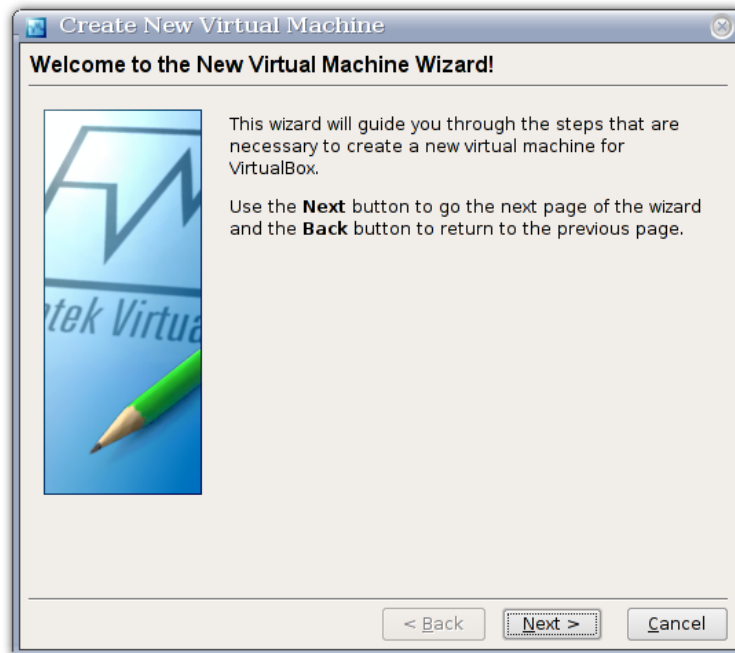
On the left, you can see a pane that lists all the virtual machines you have created so far (three in the

example above). A row of buttons above it allows you to create new VMs and work on existing VMs. The pane on the right displays the properties of the virtual machine currently selected, if any.

When you start VirtualBox for the first time, as there is no virtual machine yet, everything will be empty.

## 3.2. Creating a virtual machine

Clicking on the "New" button in the user interface will guide you through setting up a new virtual machine (VM). A wizard will show up:



On the following pages, the wizard will ask you for the bare minimum of information that is needed to create a VM, in particular:

1. A **name** for your VM, and the **type of operating system (OS)** you want to install.

The name is what you will later see in the VirtualBox main window, and what your settings will be stored under. It is purely informational, but once you have created a few VMs, you will appreciate if you have given your VMs informative names. "My VM" probably is therefore not as useful as "Windows XP SP2".

For "Operating System Type", select the operating system that you want to install later. While this setting presently has no lasting effect, VirtualBox will use this setting to display an operating system accordingly and also make certain recommendations later based on your selection (such as the amount of memory and hard disk space to allocate), and future VirtualBox versions may offer certain system-specific virtualization features. It is therefore recommended to always set it to the correct value.

2. The **amount of memory (RAM)** that the virtual machine should have for itself. Every time a virtual machine is started, VirtualBox will allocate this much memory from your host machine and present it to the guest operating system, which will report this size as the (virtual) computer's installed RAM.

### Note

Choose this setting carefully! The memory you give to the VM will not be available to your host OS while the VM is running, so do not specify more than you can spare. For example, if your host machine has 1 GB of RAM and you enter 512 MB as the amount of RAM for a

particular virtual machine, while that VM is running, you will only have 512 MB left for all the other software on your host. If you run two VMs at the same time, even more memory will be allocated for the second VM (which may not even be able to start if that memory is not available). On the other hand, you should specify as much as your guest OS (and your applications) will require to run properly.

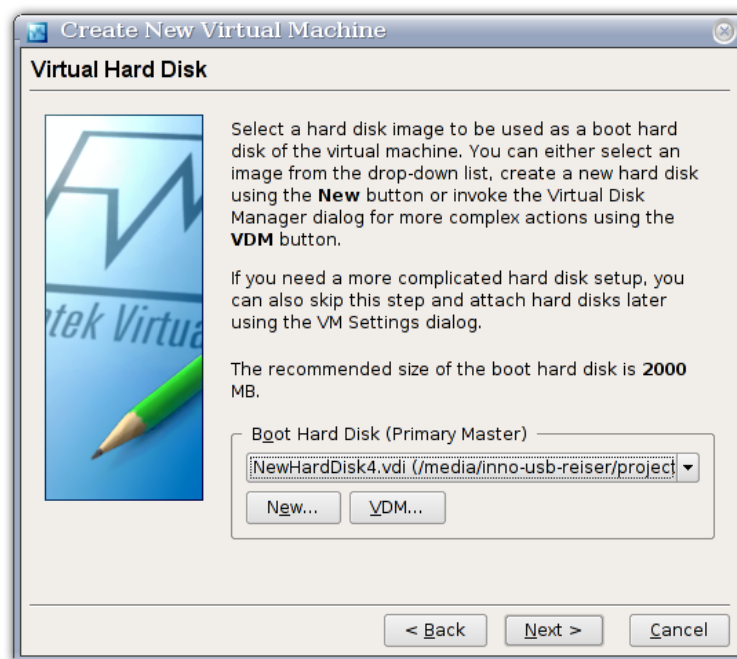
A Windows XP guest will require at least a few hundred MB RAM to run properly, and Windows Vista will even refuse to install with less than 512 MB. Of course, if you want to run graphics-intensive applications in your VM, you may require even more RAM.

So, as a rule of thumb, if you have 1 GB of RAM or more in your host computer, it is usually safe to allocate 512 MB to each VM. But, in any case, make sure you always have at least 256-512 MB of RAM left on your host operating system. Otherwise you may cause your host OS to excessively swap out memory to your hard disk, effectively bringing your host system to a standstill.

As with the other settings, you can change this setting later, after you have created the VM.

3. Next, you must specify a **virtual hard disk** for your VM. There are several ways in which VirtualBox can provide hard disk space to a VM, but the most common way is to use a virtual disk image (.VDI file) on your "real" hard disk, whose contents VirtualBox presents to your VM as if it were a complete hard disk.

The wizard presents to you the following window:



The wizard allows you to create a new virtual hard disk file for the virtual primary hard disk or use an existing one. Note also that the disk images can be separated from a particular VM, so even if you delete a VM, you can keep the .VDI file, or copy it to another host and create a new VM for it there.

In the wizard, you have the following options:

- If you have previously created any virtual hard disks which have not been attached to other virtual machines, you can select those from the drop-down list in the wizard window.
- Otherwise, to create a new virtual hard disk, press the **"New"** button.

- Finally, for more complicated operations with virtual disks, the **"Manage"** button will bring up the Virtual Disk Manager, which is described in more detail in Section 3.5, "The Virtual Disk Manager".

Most probably, if you are using VirtualBox for the first time, you will want to create a new disk image. Hence, press the "New" button.

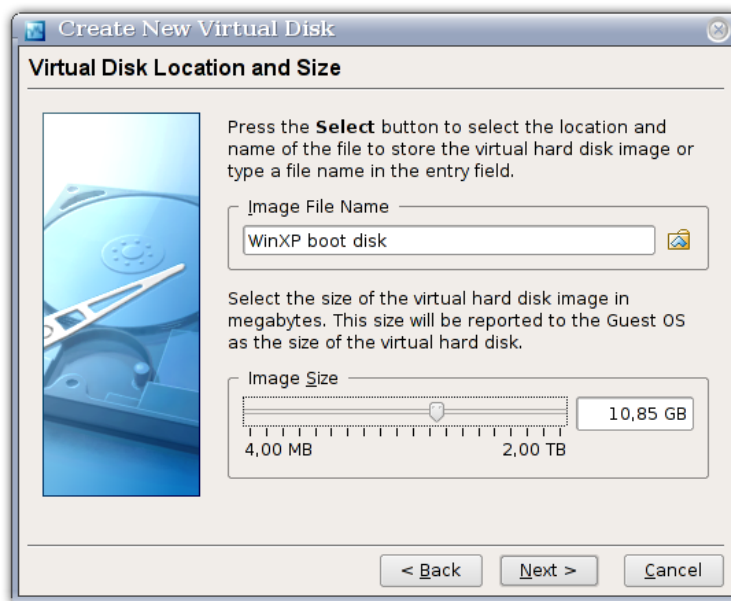
This brings up another window, the **"Create New Virtual Disk Wizard"**.

VirtualBox supports two types of VDI files:

- A **dynamically expanding file** will only grow in size when the guest actually stores data on its virtual hard disk. It will therefore initially be small on the host hard drive and only later grow to the size specified as it is filled with data.
- A **fixed-size file** will immediately occupy the file specified, even if only a fraction of the virtual hard disk space is actually in use. While occupying much more space, a fixed-size file incurs less overhead and is therefore slightly faster than a dynamically expanding file.

For details about the differences, please refer to Section 5.2.1, "Virtual Disk Image (VDI) files".

To prevent your physical hard disk from running full, VirtualBox limits the size of the image file. Still, it needs to be large enough to hold the contents of your operating system and the applications you want to install -- for a modern Windows or Linux guest, you will probably need several gigabytes for any serious use:



After having selected or created your VDI file, again press **"Next"** to go the next page.

4. After clicking on **"Finish"**, your new VM will be created. You will then see it in the list on the left side of the VirtualBox main window, with the name you have entered.

### 3.3. Basics of virtual machine configuration

When you select a virtual machine from the list of VMs in the main VirtualBox window, you will see a summary of that VM's settings on the right of the window, under the "Details" tab.

Clicking on the "Settings" button in the toolbar at the top of VirtualBox main window brings up a detailed window where you can configure many of the properties of the VM that is currently selec-

ted. But be careful: even though it is possible to change all VM settings after installing a guest operating system, certain changes might prevent a guest operating system from functioning correctly if done after installation.

## Note

The "Settings" button is disabled while a VM is either in the "running" or "saved" state. This is simply because the settings dialog allows you to change fundamental characteristics of the virtual computer that is created for your guest operating system, and this operating system may not take it well when, for example, half of its memory is taken away from under its feet. As a result, if the "Settings" button is disabled, shut down the current VM first.

VirtualBox provides a plethora of parameters that can be changed for a VM, and even more parameters are available through the `VBoxManage` program; see Section 6.1, "VBoxManage, the VirtualBox command line interface". The various settings that can be changed in the "Settings" window are described in detail in in Section 5.1, "Virtual machine settings".

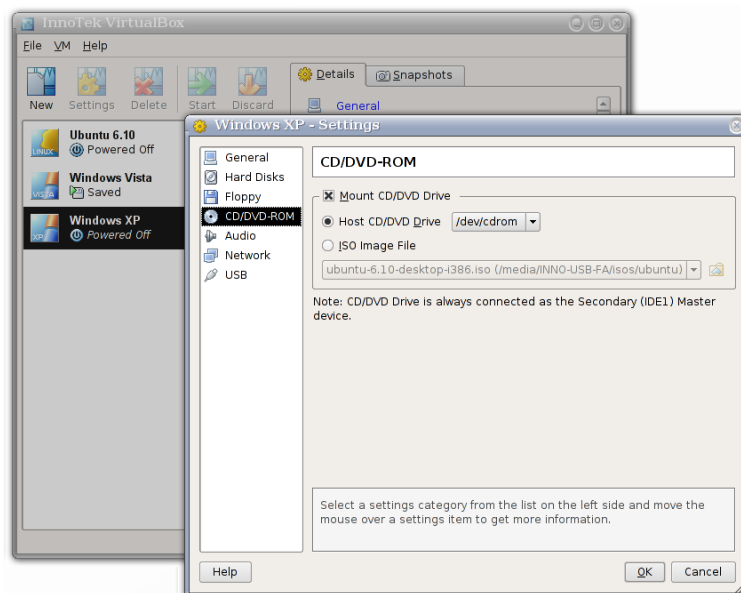
For now, if you have just created an empty VM, you will probably be most interested in the settings presented by the "CD/DVD-ROM" section if want to make a CD-ROM or a DVD-ROM available the first time you start it, in order to install your guest operating system.

For this, you have two options:

- If you have actual CD or DVD media from which you want to install your guest operating system (e.g. in the case of a Windows installation CD or DVD), put the media into your host's CD or DVD drive.

Then, in the settings dialog, go to the "CD/DVD-ROM" section and select "Host drive" with the correct drive letter (or, in the case of a Linux host, device file).

This will allow your VM to access the media in your host drive, and you can proceed to install from there.



- If you have downloaded installation media from the Internet in the form of an ISO image file (most probably in the case of a Linux distribution), you would normally burn this file to an empty CD or DVD and proceed as just described. With VirtualBox however, you can skip this step and mount the ISO file directly. VirtualBox will then present this file as a CD or DVD-ROM drive to the virtual machine, much like it does with virtual hard disk images.

In this case, in the settings dialog, go to the "CD/DVD-ROM" section and select "ISO image file". This brings up the Virtual Disk Image Manager, where you perform the following steps:

1. Press the "Add" button to add your ISO file to the list of registered images. This will present an ordinary file dialog that allows you to find your ISO file on your host machine.
2. Back to the manager window, select the ISO file that you just added and press the "Select" button. This selects the ISO file for your VM.

The Virtual Disk Image Manager is described in detail in Section 3.5, "The Virtual Disk Manager".

## 3.4. Running a virtual machine

The "Start" button in the main window starts the virtual machine that is currently selected.

This opens up a new window, and the virtual machine which you selected will boot up. Everything which would normally be seen on the virtual system's monitor is shown in the window, as can be seen with the image in Section 1.1, "Virtualization basics".

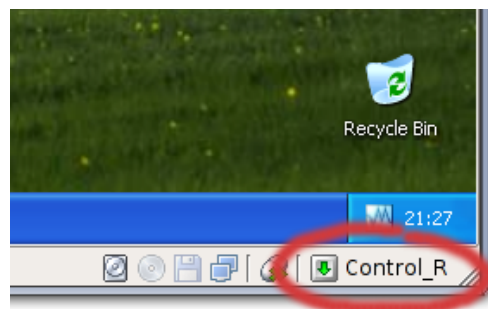
In general, you can use the virtual machine much like you would use a real computer. There are couple of points worth mentioning however.

### 3.4.1. Keyboard and mouse in a virtual machine

Since the operating system in the virtual machine does not "know" that it is not running on a real computer, it expects to have exclusive control over your keyboard and mouse. This is, however, not the case since, unless you are running the VM in full-screen mode, your VM needs to share keyboard and mouse with other applications and possibly other VMs on your host.

As a result, initially after installing a host operating system and before you install the guest additions (we will explain this in a minute), only one of the two -- your VM or the rest of your computer -- can "own" the keyboard and the mouse. You will see a *second* mouse pointer which will always be confined to the limits of the VM window. Basically, you activate the VM by clicking inside it.

To return ownership of keyboard and mouse to your host operating system, VirtualBox reserves a special key on your keyboard for itself: the "**host key**". By default, this is the *right Control key* on your keyboard, but you can change this default in the VirtualBox Global Settings. In any case, the current setting for the host key is always displayed *at the bottom right of your VM window*, should you have forgotten about it:



In detail, all this translates into the following:

- Your **keyboard** is owned by the VM if the VM window on your host desktop has the keyboard focus (and then, if you have many windows open in your guest operating system as well, the window that has the focus in your VM). This means that if you want to type within your VM, click on the title bar of your VM window first.

To release keyboard ownership, press the Host key (as explained above, typically the right Control key).

Note that while the VM owns the keyboard, some key sequences (like Alt-Tab for example) will no longer be seen by the host, but will go to the guest instead. After you press the host key to reenable the host keyboard, all key presses will go through the host again, so that sequences like Alt-Tab will no longer reach the guest.

- Your **mouse** is owned by the VM only after you have clicked in the VM window. The host mouse pointer will disappear, and your mouse will drive the guest's pointer instead of your normal mouse pointer.

Note that mouse ownership is independent of that of the keyboard: even after you have clicked on a titlebar to be able to type into the VM window, your mouse is not necessarily owned by the VM yet.

To release ownership of your mouse by the VM, also press the Host key.

As this behavior can be inconvenient, VirtualBox provides a set of tools and device drivers for guest systems called the "VirtualBox Guest Additions" which make VM keyboard and mouse operation a lot more seamless. Most importantly, the Additions will get rid of the second "guest" mouse pointer and make your host mouse pointer work directly in the guest.

This will be described later in Chapter 4, *The VirtualBox Guest Additions*.

### 3.4.2. Changing removable media

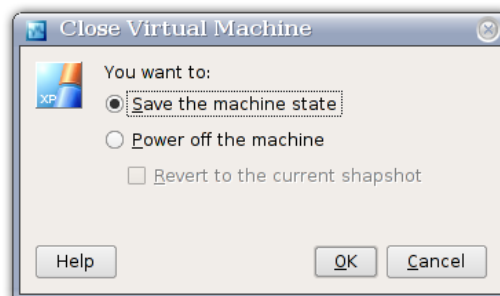
While a virtual machine is running, you can change removable media from the "Devices" menu of the VM's window. Here you can select in detail what VirtualBox presents to your VM as a CD, DVD, or floppy.

The settings are the same as would be available for the VM in the "Settings" dialog of the VirtualBox main window, but since that dialog is disabled while the VM is in "running" or "saved" state, this extra menu saves you from having to shut down and restart the VM every time you want to change media.

Hence, in the "Devices" menu, VirtualBox allows you to attach the host drive to the guest or select a floppy or DVD image using the Disk Image Manager, all as described in Section 3.3, "Basics of virtual machine configuration".

### 3.4.3. Saving the state of the machine

When you click on the "Close" button of your virtual machine window (at the top right of the window, just like you would close any other window on your system) (or press the Host key together with "Q"), VirtualBox asks you whether you want to "save" or "power off" the VM.



The difference between these two options is crucial. They mean:

- **Saving the machine state:** With this option, VirtualBox "freezes" the virtual machine by completely saving its state to your local disk. When you later resume the VM (by again clicking the "Start" button in the VirtualBox main window), you will find that the VM continues exactly where it was left off. All your programs will still be open, and your computer resumes operation.

Saving the state of a virtual machine is thus the equivalent of suspending a laptop computer (e.g. by closing its lid).

- **Power off the machine:** With this option, VirtualBox also stops running the virtual machine, but *without* saving its state. This is equivalent of pulling the power plug on a real computer without properly shutting down. If you start the machine again after powering it off, your operating system will have to reboot completely and may begin a lengthy check of its (virtual) system disks.

As a result, this should only be done with care, since it can potentially cause data loss or an inconsistent state of the guest system on disk.

The "**Discard**" button in the main VirtualBox window discards a virtual machine's saved state. This has the same effect as powering it off, and the same warnings apply.

### 3.4.4. Snapshots

With VirtualBox's snapshots, you can save a particular state of a virtual machine for later use. At any later time, you can revert to that state, even though you may have changed the VM considerably since then.

This is particularly useful for making sure that a guest installation is not damaged by accidental changes, misbehaving software, or viruses.

Once you have set up the machine the way you want it, simply take a snapshot, and should anything happen to the installation, you can simply revert to its snapshot state.

To **take a snapshot** of your VM, perform the following steps:

1. You can only take a snapshot if your VM is in the "saved" or "powered off" state (as displayed next to the VM in the VirtualBox main window). So, if your VM is not running, close it and have its state saved to disk.
2. In the VirtualBox main window, click on the "Snapshots" tab on the top right of the main window, and then on the small camera icon (for "Take snapshot").
3. A window will up and ask you to name the snapshot. This name is purely for reference purposes to help you remember the state of the snapshot. For example, a useful name would be "Fresh installation from scratch, no external drivers".
4. Your new snapshot will then appear in the list of snapshots under the "Snapshots" tab. Underneath, you will see an item called "Current state", signifying that the current state of your VM is a variation based on the snapshot you took earlier.

(If you later take another snapshot, you will see that they will be displayed in sequence, and each subsequent snapshot is a derivation of the earlier one.)

To **revert to an earlier snapshot**, you click on the "Current state" item and select "Discard current state". This will bring the VM back to the state of the nearest (most recent) snapshot. In the same way, you can merge several earlier snapshots into one.

#### Note

The snapshot reverted to will affect the virtual hard drives that are connected to your VM,

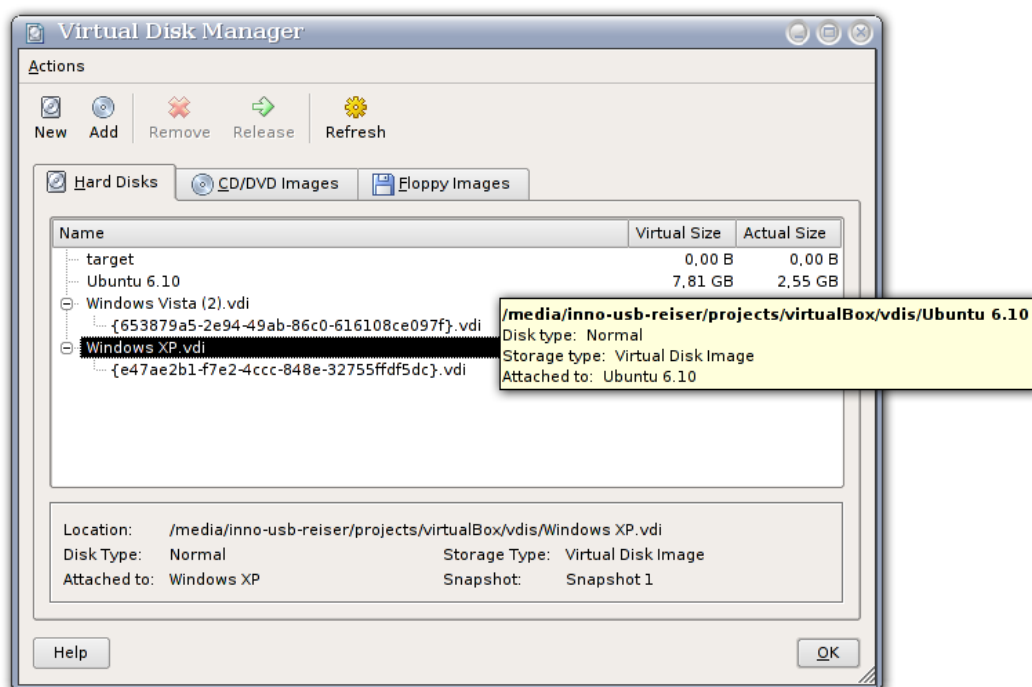


as the entire state of the virtual hard drive will be reverted as well. This means also that all files that have been created since the snapshot and all other file changes will be lost.

In order to prevent such data loss while still making use of the snapshot feature, it is possible to add a second hard drive in "write-through" mode using the `VBoxManage` interface and use it to store your data. As write-through hard drives are *not* included in snapshots, they remain unaltered when a machine is reverted. See Section 5.2, "Storage in virtual machines" for details.

## 3.5. The Virtual Disk Manager

VirtualBox keeps an internal registry of all available hard disk, CD/DVD-ROM and floppy disk images. This registry can be viewed and changed in the **Virtual Disk Manager**, which you can access from the "File" menu in the VirtualBox main window:



The Disk Image Manager shows you all images that are currently registered with VirtualBox, conveniently grouped in three tabs for the three possible formats. These formats are:

- Hard disk images in VirtualBox's own Virtual Disk Image (VDI) format. As mentioned above in Section 3.2, "Creating a virtual machine", VirtualBox creates a guest's virtual hard drive as a single big VDI file on your host computer's disk. These image files can either be set to expand as they fill up, or created to always be the size of the virtual disk;
- CD/DVD images in standard ISO format;
- floppy images in standard RAW format.

As you can see in the screenshot above, for each image, the Virtual Disk Manager shows you the full path of the image file and other information, such as the virtual machine the image is currently attached to, if any. Also, as can be seen in the screenshot, if you have created snapshots for a virtual machine, additional "differencing" hard disk images may automatically be created; see Section 3.4.4, "Snapshots" for details.

The Virtual Disk Manager allows you to

- create new hard disk images using the "**New**" button; this will bring up the "Create Disk Image" wizard already described in Section 3.2, "Creating a virtual machine";
- import existing images on your hard drive into VirtualBox using the "**Add**" button;
- **remove** an image from the registry (and optionally delete the image file when doing so);
- "**release**" an image, that is, detach it from a virtual machine if it is currently attached to one as a virtual hard disk.

We recommend that you maintain two special folders on your system for keeping images: one for VDI files (which can, in the case of dynamically expanding images, grow to considerable sizes), and one for ISO files (which were probably downloaded from the Internet).

VDI files can be copied onto other host systems and imported into virtual machines there, although certain guest systems (notably Windows 2000 and XP) will require that the new virtual machine be set up in a similar way to the old one.

You can also duplicate VDI files on the same host to quickly produce a second virtual machine with the same operating system setup. However, you should *only* make copies of virtual disk images using the utility supplied with VirtualBox; see Section 6.1.14, "VBoxManage clonevdi". This is because VirtualBox assigns a unique identity number (UUID) to each disk image, which is also stored inside the image, and will refuse to work with two images that use the same number. If you do accidentally try to reimport a disk image which you copied normally, you can make a second copy using VirtualBox's utility and import that instead.

## 3.6. Deleting virtual machines

The "Delete" button in the main VirtualBox window lets you remove a virtual machine which you no longer need. All settings for that machine will be lost. However, any hard disk images attached to the machine will be kept; you can delete those separately using the Disk Image Manager (described just above).

You cannot delete a machine which has snapshots or is in a saved state, so you must discard these first.

---

# Chapter 4. The VirtualBox Guest Additions

The previous chapter covered getting started with VirtualBox and installing operating systems. For any serious and interactive use, the VirtualBox Guest Additions will make your life much easier by providing closer integration between host and guest and improving the interactive performance of guest systems.

## 4.1. Introduction

As said in Section 1.1, “Virtualization basics”, the Guest Additions are designed to be installed *inside* a virtual machine. They consist of device drivers and system applications for the guest operating system that optimize the guest for better performance and usability. To install these additions, you simply provide a special ISO file that comes with VirtualBox as a virtual CD-ROM to your guest operating system and install from there.

VirtualBox presently provides Guest Additions for Windows and Linux guests; if you need support for other operating systems, please contact InnoTek.

Our Guest Additions offer the following features:

1. **Mouse pointer integration.** To overcome the limitations for mouse support that were described in Section 3.4.1, “Keyboard and mouse in a virtual machine”, this provides you with seamless mouse support. Essentially, a special mouse driver is installed in the Windows or Linux guest that communicates with the “real” mouse driver on your host and moves the guest mouse pointer accordingly. You will only have one mouse pointer any more, and pressing the Host key is no longer required to “free” the mouse from being captured by the guest OS.
2. **Better video support.** While the virtual graphics card the VirtualBox emulates for any guest operating system provides all the basic features, the custom video drivers that are installed with the Guest Additions provide you with extra high and non-standard video modes as well as accelerated video performance.

In addition, with Windows guests, when the Guest Additions are installed, you can resize the virtual machine's window, and the video resolution in the Windows guest will be automatically adjusted (as if you had manually entered an arbitrary resolution in the guest's display settings).

3. **Time synchronization.** With the Guest Additions installed, VirtualBox can much better ensure that the guest's system time is better synchronized. The problem is that an operating system expects to have 100% of a computer's time for itself without interference, which is no longer the case when your VM runs together with your host operating system and possibly other applications on your host. As a result, your guest operating system's timing will soon be off significantly. The Guest Additions will re-synchronize the time regularly.
4. **Shared Folders.** These provide an easy way to exchange files between the host and the guest. Much similar to ordinary Windows network shares, you can tell VirtualBox to treat a certain folder as a shared folder, and VirtualBox will make it available to the guest operating system as a network share. For details, please refer to Section 5.4, “Folder Sharing”.
5. **Automated Windows logons (credentials passing; Windows guests only).** For details, please see Section 7.2, “Automated Windows Guest Logons (VBoxGINA)”.

## 4.2. Windows Guest Additions

The VirtualBox Windows Guest Additions are designed to be installed in a virtual machine running a Windows operating system. The following versions of Windows guests are supported:

- Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 (any service pack)

- Microsoft Windows 2000 (any service pack)
- Microsoft Windows XP (any service pack)
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 (any service pack)

Generally, it is strongly recommend to install the Windows Guest Additions.

## 4.2.1. Installing the Windows Guest Additions

The VirtualBox Guest Additions are provided as a CD-ROM image file which is called `VBoxGuestAdditions.iso`. An easy-to-use installation program will guide you through the setup process. As VirtualBox can provide ISO files as a virtual CD-ROM drive to the Windows guest, Windows can automatically install these additions.

### 4.2.1.1. Mounting the Additions ISO file

In the "Devices" menu in the virtual machine's menu bar, VirtualBox has a handy menu item named "Install guest additions", which will automatically bring up the Additions in your VM window.

If the menu item does not work, you can perform the following steps manually:

1. Start the virtual machine where you have installed a Windows guest operating system.
2. Select "Mount CD/DVD-ROM" from the "Devices" menu in the virtual machine's menu bar and then "CD/DVD-ROM image". This brings up the Virtual Disk Manager described in Section 3.5, "The Virtual Disk Manager".
3. In the Virtual Disk Manager, press the "Add" button and browse your host file system for the `VBoxGuestAdditions.iso` file:
  - On a Windows host, you can find this file in the VirtualBox installation directory (usually under `C:\Program files\InnoTek VirtualBox`).
  - On a Linux host, you can find this file in the `additions` folder under where you installed VirtualBox (usually `/opt/VirtualBox-xxx`).
4. Back in the Virtual Disk Manager, select that ISO file and press the "Select" button. This will mount the ISO file and present it to your Windows guest as a CD-ROM.

### 4.2.1.2. Running the installer

Unless you have the Autostart feature disabled in your Windows guest, Windows will now autostart the VirtualBox Guest Additions installation program from the Additions ISO. If the Autostart feature has been turned off, choose `setup.exe` from the CD/DVD drive inside the guest to start the installer.

The installer will add several device drivers to the Windows driver database and then invoke the hardware detection wizard.

Depending on your configuration, it might display warnings that the drivers are not digitally signed. You must confirm these in order to continue the installation and properly install the Additions.

After installation, reboot your guest operating system to activate the Additions.

## 4.2.2. Updating the Windows Guest Additions

Windows Guest Additions can be updated by running the installation program again, as previously described. This will then replace the previous Additions drivers with updated versions.

Alternatively, you may also open the Windows Device Manager and select "Update driver..." for two devices:

1. the VirtualBox Graphics Adapter and
2. the VirtualBox System Device.

For each, choose to provide your own driver and use "Have Disk" to point the wizard to the CD-ROM drive with the Guest Additions.

### 4.2.3. Unattended Installation

In order to allow for completely unattended guest installations of Windows 2000 and XP, the Guest Additions driver files have been put separately on the Additions ISO file. Just like with other third-party drivers, the files have to be copied to the OEM directory of Windows. Using the PCI hardware detection, they will then be recognized and installed automatically.

## 4.3. Linux Guest Additions

Like the Windows Guest Additions, the VirtualBox Guest Additions for Linux take the form of a set of device drivers and system applications which may be installed in the guest operating system.

The following Linux distributions are officially supported:

- Fedora Core 4 and 5
- Redhat Enterprise Linux 3 and 4
- SUSE Linux 9 and 10
- Ubuntu 5.10 and 6.06

Other distributions may work if they are based on comparable software releases. If you require such support, please contact InnoTek.

As with Windows guests, we recommend installation of the VirtualBox Guest Additions for Linux.

### 4.3.1. Installing the Linux Guest Additions

The VirtualBox Guest Additions for Linux are provided on the same ISO CD-ROM as the Additions for Windows described above. They also come with an installation program guiding you through the setup process, although, due to the significant differences between Linux distributions, installation may be slightly more complex.

Installation involves the following steps:

1. Before installing the Guest Additions, you will have to prepare your guest system for building external kernel modules. This is exactly the same process as described in Section 2.2.2, "Support for external kernel modules", except that this step must now be performed in your Linux *guest* instead of on a Linux host system, as described there.
2. Mount the `VBoxGuestAdditions.iso` file as your Linux guest's virtual CD-ROM drive, exactly the same way as described for a Windows guest in Section 4.2.1.1, "Mounting the Additions ISO file".
3. Change to the directory where your CD-ROM drive is mounted<sup>1</sup> and execute as root:

---

<sup>1</sup>Normally `/media/cdrom` or `/mnt/cdrom`.

```
sh ./VBoxLinuxAdditions.run all
```

### 4.3.2. Video acceleration and high resolution graphics modes

In Linux guests, VirtualBox video acceleration is available through the X Window System. Typically, in today's Linux distributions, this will be the X.Org server. During the installation process, X will be set up to use the VirtualBox video driver, using whatever graphics modes were set up before the installation. If these modes do not suit your requirements, you can change your setup by editing the configuration file of the X server, usually found in `/etc/X11/xorg.conf`.

VirtualBox can use any default X graphics mode which fits into the virtual video memory allocated to the virtual machine, as described in Section 5.1.1, “General settings”. You can also add your own modes to the Monitor section of the X server configuration file. VirtualBox will accept any modes acceptable to X with a vertical refresh of at least 1 Hz, a horizontal refresh of at least 1 kHz and a horizontal resolution which is a multiple of eight.

An example of a mode line for a 5120x1024 graphics mode would be:

```
ModeLine "5120x1024" 25 5120 5121 5122 5123 1024 1025 1026 1027
```

### 4.3.3. Updating the Linux Guest Additions

The Guest Additions can simply be updated by going through the installation procedure again with an updated CD-ROM image. This will replace the drivers with updated versions. You should reboot after updating the Guest Additions.

---

# Chapter 5. More details about virtual machines

## 5.1. Virtual machine settings

Below we describe the various settings that are available for each VM.

Most of these settings are available in the settings window after selecting a virtual machine in the VirtualBox main window and clicking on the "Settings" button. To keep the user interface simple, those of the following settings which are not as commonly used are not shown in that settings window. They are, however, available through `VBoxManage` and will be described in Section 6.1, "VBoxManage, the VirtualBox command line interface" later.

### 5.1.1. General settings

In the Settings window, under "General", you can configure the most fundamental aspects of the virtual machine such as memory and essential hardware. The following settings are available:

Name	The name under which the VM is shown in the list of VMs in the main window. Under this name, VirtualBox also saves the VM's configuration files. By changing the name, VirtualBox re-names these files as well. As a result, you can only use characters which are allowed in your host operating system's file names.
------	--

Note that internally, VirtualBox uses unique identifiers (UUIDs) to identify virtual machines. You can display these with `VBoxManage`.

OS Type	The type of the guest operating system that is (or will be) installed in the VM. This is the same setting that was specified in the "New Virtual Machine" wizard, as described with Section 3.2, "Creating a virtual machine" above.
---------	--

Memory size (RAM)	The amount of RAM that is allocated and given to the VM when it is running. The specified amount of memory will be allocated from the host operating system (from resident memory so it must be available or made available as free memory on the host when attempting to start the VM and will not be available to the host while the VM is running). Again, this is the same setting that was specified in the "New Virtual Machine" wizard, as described with guidelines under Section 3.2, "Creating a virtual machine" above.
-------------------	--

Generally, it is possible to change the memory size after installing the guest operating system (provided you do not reduce the memory to an amount where the operating system would no longer boot).

#### Note

As Microsoft Windows' activation mechanism is sensitive to some hardware changes, if you are changing settings for a Windows guest, some of these changes may trigger a request for another activation with Microsoft.

Video memory size	Size of the memory provided by the virtual graphics card available to the guest, in MB. As with the main memory, the specified amount will be allocated from the host's resident memory.
-------------------	--

	<p>Based on the amount of video memory, higher resolutions and color depths may be available, but for most setups, the default video memory size of 4MB should be sufficient.</p>
Boot order	<p>This setting determines the order in which the guest operating system will attempt to boot from the various virtual boot devices. Analogous to a real PC's BIOS setting, VirtualBox can tell a guest OS to start from the virtual floppy, the virtual CD/DVD drive, the virtual hard drive (each of these as defined by the other VM settings), or none of these.</p> <p>With <code>VBoxManage modifyvm -boot&lt;1-4&gt;</code>, you can also configure a VM to boot from the network. See Section 6.1.5, “VBoxManage modifyvm”.</p>
Enable ACPI	<p>VirtualBox can present the Advanced Configuration and Power Interface (ACPI) to the guest operating system for configuring the virtual hardware. In addition, via ACPI, VirtualBox can present the host's power status information to the guest.</p> <p>ACPI is the current industry standard to allow operating systems to recognize hardware, configure motherboards and other devices and manage power. As all modern PCs contain this feature and Windows and Linux have been supporting it for years, it is also enabled by default in VirtualBox.</p> <p>Note that all Windows operating systems starting with Windows 2000 install different kernels depending on whether ACPI is available, so <i>ACPI must not be turned off</i> after installation. Turning it on after installation will have no effect however.</p>
Enable I/O APIC	<p>Advanced Programmable Interrupt Controllers (APICs) are a newer x86 hardware feature that have replaced old-style Programmable Interrupt Controllers (PICs) in recent years. With an I/O APIC, operating systems can use more than 16 interrupt requests (IRQs) and therefore avoid IRQ sharing for improved reliability.</p> <p>However, software support for I/O APICs has been unreliable with some operating systems other than Windows. Also, the use of an I/O APIC slightly increases the overhead of virtualization and therefore slows down the guest OS a little.</p> <p>Note that all Windows operating systems starting with Windows 2000 install different kernels depending on whether an I/O APIC is available. As with ACPI, the I/O APIC therefore <i>must not be turned off after installation</i> of a Windows guest OS. Turning it on after installation will have no effect however.</p>
Snapshot folder	<p>By default, VirtualBox saves snapshot data together with your other VirtualBox configuration data (on Linux hosts, this is <code>~/.VirtualBox/Machines/&lt;vmname&gt;/Snapshots</code>). With this setting, you can specify any other folder for each VM.</p>
BIOS logo customization	<p>By default, when the virtual machine starts up, VirtualBox displays the InnoTek company logo. With <code>VBoxManage</code>, you can change this logo to one of your choosing.</p>

### 5.1.2. Hard disks

In the VM Settings window, the "Hard Disks" section allows you to connect up to three virtual hard disk images to your virtual machine.



As with a real PC, VirtualBox's IDE support offers you two IDE controllers, each with a "master" and a "slave" connection. With one of these four connectors being reserved to the CD-ROM/DVD drive (see below), that leaves you with three possible hard disks, each represented by one virtual disk image (.VDI file).

The settings of the first disk ("Primary Master") are initially set by the "Create VM" wizard. Normally, you will stick with this setting for the rest of a VM's lifetime. You may, however, freely remove, add and exchange virtual hard drives after the machine has been set up. For example, if you wish to copy some files from another virtual disk that you created, you can connect that disk as a second hard disk.

To connect an additional disk, select the corresponding checkbox and click on the folder icon on the right to bring up the Virtual Disk Image Manager. To remove a virtual disk, simply uncheck the appropriate checkbox. To replace a hard drive with a different one, click on the folder icon for that drive and select or create a new one using the Virtual Disk Manager.

For more information, please see Section 3.5, "The Virtual Disk Manager" and Section 5.2.1, "Virtual Disk Image (VDI) files".

### 5.1.3. CD/DVD-ROM and floppy settings

In the VM Settings window, the settings in these two categories determine what VirtualBox provides as a floppy disk and as a CD/DVD-ROM drive to your VM's guest operating system. For both the floppy and CD/DVD-ROM categories, the following options are available:

- **Not mounted:** The virtual device is presented as empty, that is, no floppy (or no CD/DVD-ROM) is present.
- **Host drive:** The physical device of the host computer is connected to the VM, so that the guest operating system can read from and write to your physical device. This is, for instance, useful if you want to install Windows from a real installation CD. In this case, select from the drop-down list the drive letter (or, on the Linux host, the device) of your host drive.
- **Image file:** Quite similar to virtual hard disks, this presents a file on your host as a device to the guest operating system. To use an image file, you must first import it into the Virtual Disk Manager; see Section 3.5, "The Virtual Disk Manager". The image file format varies depending on the type of device:
  - For floppies, the file must be in raw format.
  - For CD- and DVD-ROMs, the file must be in ISO format. Most commonly, you will select this option when installing an operating system from an ISO file that you have obtained from the Internet. For example, most Linux distributions are available in this way.

All these settings can be changed while the guest is running. Since the "Settings" dialog is not available at that time, you can also access these settings from the "Devices" menu of your virtual machine window.

#### Note

The identification string of the drive provided to the guest (which is displayed by some configuration tools such as the Windows Device Manager) is always "VBOX CD-ROM", irrespective of the current configuration of the virtual drive. This is to prevent hardware detection from being triggered in the guest operating system every time the configuration is changed.

Using the host drive normally provides a read-only drive to the guest. As an experimental feature (which currently works for data only, audio is not supported), it is possible to give the guest access to the CD/DVD writing features of the host drive (if available):

```
VBoxManage modifyvm <vmname> -dvdpassthrough=on
```

See also Section 6.1.5, “VBoxManage modifyvm”.

## 5.1.4. Audio settings

The "Audio" section in a virtual machine's Settings window determines whether the VM will see a sound card connected, and whether the audio output should be heard on the host system.

If audio is enabled for a guest, VirtualBox simulates an Intel AC'97 controller for the virtual machine. In that case, you can select what audio driver VirtualBox will use on the host. On Linux hosts, you can select between the OSS or the ALSA subsystem.

## 5.1.5. Network settings

The "Network" section in a virtual machine's Settings window allows you to configure how VirtualBox presents virtual network cards to your VM, and how they operate.

VirtualBox can simulate up to four virtual network cards for a virtual machine. These cards are presented as AMD PCNET cards, which most current operating systems (as well as GNU GRUB) support out of the box, without needing extra drivers.

When you first create a virtual machine, VirtualBox enables one of these four cards and selects "Network Address Translation (NAT)" for it. This way the the guest can connect to the outside world using the host's networking, but it does not allow the host or other physical machines to make new connections to the guest (other than answering requests sent by the guest).

In other words, the default settings are good enough for supporting the most common Internet services (surfing, downloading and e-mail) in the guest. For details about the more advanced Network settings, please see Section 5.3, “Networking in virtual machines”.

## 5.1.6. USB support

### 5.1.6.1. USB settings

The "USB" section in a virtual machine's Settings window allows you to configure VirtualBox's sophisticated USB support.

VirtualBox can allow virtual machines to access the USB devices on your host directly. To achieve this, VirtualBox presents to the guest operating system a virtual USB controller. As soon as the guest system starts using a USB device, it will appear as unavailable on the host.

#### Note

Be careful with USB devices that are currently in use on the host! For example, if you allow your guest to connect to your USB hard disk that is currently mounted on the host, when the guest is activated, it will be disconnected from the without a proper shutdown. This may cause data loss.

In addition to allowing a guest access to your local USB devices, VirtualBox even allows your guests to connect to remote USB devices by use of the VRDP protocol. For details about this, see Section 5.5.2, “Remote USB”.

In the Settings dialog, you can first configure whether USB is available in the guest at all. If so, you can determine in detail which devices are available. For this, you must create so-called "filters" by specifying certain properties of the USB device.

Clicking on the "+" button to the right of the "USB Device Filters" window creates a **new filter**. You can give the filter a name (for referencing it later) and specify the filter criteria. The more criteria you specify, the more precisely devices will be selected. For instance, if you specify only a vendor ID of 046d, all devices produced by Logitech will be available to the guest. If you fill in all fields, on the other hand, the filter will only apply to a particular device model from a particular vendor, and not even to other devices of the same type with a different revision and serial number.

In detail, the following criteria are available:

1. **Vendor and product ID.** With USB, each vendor of USB products carries an identification number that is unique world-wide, the "vendor ID". Similarly, each line of products is assigned a "product ID" number. Both numbers are commonly written in hexadecimal (that is, they are composed of the numbers 0-9 and the letters A-F), and a colon separates the vendor from the product ID. For example, 046d:c016 stands for Logitech as a vendor, and the "M-UV69a Optical Wheel Mouse" product.

Alternatively, you can also specify "**Manufacturer**" and "**Product**" by name.

To list all the USB devices that are connected to your host machine with their respective vendor and product IDs, you can use the following command (see Section 6.1, "VBoxManage, the VirtualBox command line interface"):

```
VBoxManage list usbhost
```

On Windows, you can also see all USB devices that are attached to your system in the Device Manager. On Linux, you can use the `lsusb` command.

2. **Serial number.** While vendor and product ID are already quite specific to identify USB devices, if you have two identical devices of the same brand and product line, you will also need their serial numbers to filter them out correctly.
3. **Remote.** This setting specifies whether the device will be local only, or remote only (over VRDP), or either.

On a Windows host, you will need to unplug and reconnect a USB device to use it after creating a filter for it.

As an example, you could create a new USB filter and specify a vendor ID of 046d (Logitech, Inc), a manufacturer index of 1, and "not remote". Then any USB devices on the host system produced by Logitech, Inc with a manufacturer index of 1 will be visible to the guest system.

Several filters can select a single device -- for example, a filter which selects all Logitech devices, and one which selects a particular webcam.

You can **deactivate** filters without deleting them by clicking in the checkbox next to the filter name.

### 5.1.6.2. Implementation notes

On Windows hosts, two kernel mode device drivers provide USB proxy support. A USB filter driver allows VirtualBox to capture devices when they are plugged in. Installing, uninstalling and updating this filter requires a system restart. A second USB device driver then claims USB devices and makes them available to a virtual machine. After defining a USB device filter for a VM, the device needs to be replugged once for VirtualBox to claim it. Also, you might have to confirm a driver signing warning when starting a VM with assigned USB devices.

On Linux hosts, VirtualBox accesses USB devices on Linux through the `usbfs` file system. Therefore, the user executing VirtualBox needs read and write permission to the USB file system. Most distributions provide a group (e.g. `usbusers`) which the VirtualBox user needs to be added to. Also, VirtualBox can only proxy to virtual machines USB devices which are not claimed by a Linux host USB driver. Please refer to the `driver=` entry in `/proc/bus/usb/devices` to see which devices are claimed.

## 5.2. Storage in virtual machines

### 5.2.1. Virtual Disk Image (VDI) files

VirtualBox implements a custom container format for guest hard disks -- Virtual Disk Image (VDI)

files.

The VDI files reside on the host system and are seen by the guest systems as hard disks of a certain geometry. When creating an image, its size has to be specified which determines this fixed geometry. It is therefore not possible to change the size of the virtual hard disk later.

As briefly mentioned in Section 3.2, “Creating a virtual machine”, there are two options of how to create the image: fixed-size or dynamically expanding.

- If you create a **fixed-size image** of e.g. 10 GB, a VDI file of roughly the same size will be created immediately on your host system.
- For more flexible storage management, use a **dynamically expanding image**. This will initially be very small and not occupy any space for unused virtual disk sectors, but the image file will grow every time a disk sector is written to for the first time. While this format takes less space initially, the fact that VirtualBox needs to constantly expand the image file consumes additional computing resources, so until the disk has fully expanded, write operations are slower than with fixed size disks. However, after a dynamic disk has fully expanded, the performance penalty for read and write operations is negligible.

For either of the above two image types (that is, irrespective of whether an image is fixed-size or dynamically expanding), you can also specify whether write operations affect the image directly.

1. With **normal images** (the default setting), there are no restrictions on how guests can read from and write to the disk. Because of this, a normal hard disk can only be attached to a single virtual machine at any given time (although you can detach them from a VM and attach them to another).

When you take a snapshot of your virtual machine as described in Section 3.4.4, “Snapshots”, the state of such a “normal hard disk” will be recorded together with the snapshot, and when reverting to the snapshot, its state will be fully reset.

2. By contrast, **immutable images** are read-only and can be used from multiple virtual machines simultaneously. Write accesses to immutable hard disks will be directed to a special differencing disk image which VirtualBox creates automatically. However, when you shut down the VM to which the immutable disk is attached, the changes in the differencing disk will be completely discarded.

Of course, *creating* a virtual disk image as immutable makes no sense, because then the hard disk would always be reset to an empty state when the VM is shut down to which it is attached. Hence, you will ordinarily create a “normal” virtual disk image and then, when its contents are deemed useful, then mark it immutable.

To mark a disk image as “immutable”, use the `VBoxManage modifyvdi` command; see Section 6.1.13, “VBoxManage modifyvdi”.

3. Finally, **write-through hard disks** are like normal hard disks in that they fully support read and write operations also. However, their state is *not* saved when a snapshot is taken, and not restored when a VM's state is reverted.

To *create* a disk image as “write-through”, use the `VBoxManage createvdi` command; see Section 6.1.12, “VBoxManage createvdi”. To mark an existing image as write-through, use `VBoxManage modifyvdi`; see Section 6.1.13, “VBoxManage modifyvdi”.

To illustrate the differences between the various types with respect to snapshots: You have installed your guest operating system in your VM, and you have taken a snapshot. Imagine you have accidentally infected your VM with a virus and would like to go back to the snapshot. With a normal hard disk image, you simply revert the state of the VM, and the earlier state of your hard disk image will be restored as well (and your virus infection will be undone). With an immutable hard disk, ir-

respective of the snapshot, all it takes is to shut down your VM, and the virus infection will be discarded. With a write-through image however, you cannot easily undo the virus infection by means of virtualization, but will have to disinfect your virtual machine like a real computer.

Still, you might find write-through images useful if you want to preserve critical data irrespective of snapshots, and since you can attach more than one VDI to a VM, you may want to have one immutable for the operating system and one write-through for your data files.

### 5.2.2. iSCSI servers

iSCSI stands for "Internet SCSI" and is a standard that allows for using the SCSI<sup>1</sup> protocol over Internet (TCP/IP) connections. Especially with the advent of Gigabit Ethernet, it has become affordable to attach iSCSI storage servers simply as remote hard disks to a computer network. In iSCSI terminology, the server providing storage resources is called an "iSCSI target", while the client connecting to the server and accessing its resources is called "iSCSI initiator".

VirtualBox is unique on the virtualization market in that it can transparently present iSCSI remote storage to a virtual machine as a virtual hard disk. The guest operating system will not see any difference between a virtual disk image (VDI file) and an iSCSI target. To achieve this, VirtualBox has an integrated iSCSI initiator.

VirtualBox's iSCSI support has been developed according to the iSCSI standard and should work with all standard-conforming iSCSI targets. To use an iSCSI target with VirtualBox, you must first register it as a virtual hard disk with `VBoxManage`; see Section 6.1.15, "VBoxManage addscsidisk". The target will show up in the list of disk images, as described in Section 3.5, "The Virtual Disk Manager", and can thus be attached to one of the VM's three hard disk slots the usual way.

#### Note

As opposed to the VDI files described previously, the type of iSCSI targets cannot be "normal" or "immutable", but will always be set to "write through". This means that their state is not saved or reverted with snapshots.

## 5.3. Networking in virtual machines

As briefly mentioned in Section 5.1.5, "Network settings", VirtualBox provides up to four virtual PCI Ethernet cards for each virtual machine.

Each of these adapters can be separately configured in one of the following four modes:

- Not attached
- Network Address Translation
- Host Interface Networking
- Internal Networking

The following sections describe the available network modes.

### 5.3.1. Not attached

---

<sup>1</sup>SCSI, in turn, is the "Small Computer System Interface" and is an established industry standard for data transfer between devices, notably storage devices. Established as early as 1986, SCSI is still used for connecting hard disks and tape devices even today. Especially in the PC market, however, it competed with other data transfer standards such as IDE. It is still in common use in workstations and servers.

When a virtual network card's mode is set to "Not attached", VirtualBox reports to the guest that a network card is present, but that there is no connection -- as if no Ethernet cable was plugged into the card. This way it is possible to "pull" the virtual Ethernet cable and disrupt the connection, which can be useful to inform a guest operating system that no network connection is available and enforce a reconfiguration.

### 5.3.2. Network Address Translation (NAT)

Network Address Translation is the simplest way of accessing an external network from a virtual machine. Usually, it does not require any configuration on the host network and guest system.

In NAT mode, the guest operating system receives its network configuration from an DHCP server that is integrated into VirtualBox. The network frames from the guest operating system are analyzed by VirtualBox's NAT engine, the TCP/IP data is extracted, and the host operating system's TCP/IP engine is then used to send the translated data.

However, VirtualBox's NAT engine currently only supports *outgoing* TCP/IP connections (TCP and UDP). It is therefore not possible to establish connections from the external network (including the host machine) to the virtual machine.

NAT is good enough for surfing the Internet, downloading files, and receiving e-mail in the guest operating system. As you cannot, however, establish new connections to the guest, you cannot run a server inside the guest. This also means that folders declared as "shared" with Windows Networking (SMB) will not be found from outside the virtual machine. If you require these, you will need one of the more advanced (but more complicated) network setups that follow.

### 5.3.3. Host Interface Networking

*Note:* Currently, Host Interface Networking is not compatible with User Account Control (UAC) in Windows Vista. In order to use this feature, you have to do disable UAC. This will be addressed in a future release of VirtualBox.

With Host Interface Networking, VirtualBox creates a new *host* networking interface for a guest's virtual network card. In other words, the virtual network card of the guest is also represented as if another network card was plugged into the host system.

With Host Interface Networking, your virtual machines can be accessed from other computers and the Internet. As opposed to with NAT that we described just above, you can therefore run server software in your VMs. Also, network protocols other than TCP/IP are supported.

The following general rules apply to host networking:

1. A host interface must be created statically on the host before being attached to a virtual machine's virtual networking card. (Alternatively, on Linux hosts, interfaces can also be created dynamically by VirtualBox.)
2. A host interface can only be connected to one virtual network card at a time.
3. Even though host interfaces are *created* on the host, they must be *configured* only from within the guest. Do not set network parameters from the host.

Also, generally speaking, there are two ways in which your new host interface can gain access to the network traffic for the virtual machine:

- With TCP/IP **routing**, the standard mechanisms for TCP/IP routing apply. Most probably, you give the new host interface its own IP address and then set up a route from the host interface to your real network interface (and back) with the `route` command. With this method, you have to define an identical IP configuration on both the guest and the host interface and configure the correct routing rules on the host.

Since most host network interfaces are not normally configured to support this, however, routing requires a thorough understanding of TCP/IP networking and will not be covered here. VirtualBox does support it though, and if you require support for it, do not hesitate to contact InnoTek.

- With Ethernet **bridging**, by contrast, you can sort of split a physical network adapter into two by switching it into the so-called "promiscuous" mode. This means that the network adapter will also accept packages (ethernet frames) for MAC addresses other than its own, as well as send out packets with a MAC address other than its own. By establishing a second, "virtual" MAC address for the guest, you can make your network adapter act as if it was really two network adapters.

In some network environments, measures have been taken to prevent a client connected to an Ethernet switch from using more than one source MAC address on a single Ethernet port by temporarily blocking communication on the switch port. These setups are not compatible with Host Interface Networking in bridging mode.

### 5.3.3.1. Bridging on Windows hosts

When you install VirtualBox on the Windows host, a special networking driver is installed together with the rest of VirtualBox. This driver, the VirtualBox Host Interface NDIS driver, can be used to create additional host interfaces.

Use the `VBoxManage` tool to create new host interfaces on your Windows system:

```
VBoxManage createhostif "VM1 external"
```

Each new host interface thus created appears as an additional network card in your standard "Network Connections" properties.

#### Note

If your host is running Windows XP or newer, you can also use the built-in bridging feature to connect your host interfaces to your physical network card. After creating the desired host interfaces, select your physical network adapter in the Network Connections folder and the desired host interface adapters and select "Bridge connections" from the popup menu. Note that you have to transfer your network configuration from your physical network adapter to the network bridge because your physical network adapter will only function as a transport medium in your bridge setup. When more than one connection is active on a bridge, Windows will automatically put your physical Ethernet adapter into promiscuous mode so that it will receive network data for all bridged connections.

After you have created your new host interface this way, you can select "Host Interface" as the networking mode in a virtual machine's Settings window and select the new interface in the "Interface name" drop-down list. With the above example, this drop-down list would contain "VM1 external".

### 5.3.3.2. Bridging on Linux hosts

On Linux, we have implemented Host Interface Networking with the Linux kernel's own TAP interfaces. Therefore, make sure that your Linux kernel has support for TUN/TAP enabled. Additional drivers are then not required.

With TAP, the Linux kernel can simulate Ethernet interfaces that, instead of being attached to networking hardware, communicate with user-space programs -- in our case, VirtualBox. The TAP interfaces therefore appear like physical network interfaces (e.g. `eth0`) on your system.

#### Note

TAP is an Ethernet methodology and therefore independent of TCP/IP networking. When you set up TAP devices on your host, you therefore do not need to set TCP/IP configuration (such as a IP address and netmask) on it.

For information how to create TAP devices, please refer to the documentation of your distribution. Often, this can be accomplished using the `tunctl` utility, which is part of the User Mode Linux project.<sup>2</sup> Bridging then is a feature provided by the Linux kernel and can be controlled with the `brctl` command from another utility package.<sup>3</sup> Now, to make things even more complicated, there are two ways these interfaces can be created:

1. As described for Windows hosts above, it is possible to define **static**, persistent TAP interfaces on the Linux host and make them available to VirtualBox.
2. You can also have VirtualBox create TAP interfaces **dynamically** each time a VM starts, and destroyed when the VM stops.

We shall describe both methods below.

#### 5.3.3.2.1. Static TAP interfaces

After creating a new TAP interface, you will have to create an ethernet bridge, put your Ethernet adapter into promiscuous mode so that it can accept frames for other interfaces as well, add it to the bridge and then transfer the network configuration of your Ethernet adapter to the bridge.

To create a TUN device and bridge it, perform the following steps as root:

1. As root, run `tunctl` to create a new TAP interface:

```
tunctl -t tap1 -u <username>
```

where `<username>` is the user who wants to run VirtualBox with the new bridge.

2. Create a new bridge, which we will call `br0`:

```
/sbin/brctl addbr br0
```

3. Put your network adapter in promiscuous mode so that it will accept Ethernet frames for MAC addresses other than its own:

```
/sbin/ifconfig eth0 0.0.0.0 promisc
```

4. Add your network adapter to the bridge:

```
/sbin/brctl addif br0 eth0
```

5. Transfer the network configuration of your ethernet adapter to the bridge (the following example assumes your network adapter is configured with DHCP):

```
/sbin/dhclient br0
```

Your physical Ethernet adapter will now merely act as a transport medium for the bridge.

6. Add the new TAP device to the bridge as well:

```
/sbin/brctl addif br0 tap1
```

After this, you can now specify `tap1` in the settings of your virtual machine, as if it were a real network adapter.

---

<sup>2</sup>On Gentoo Linux, as of December 2006, this can be found in the `sys-apps/usermode-utilities` package.

<sup>3</sup>On Gentoo Linux, as of December 2006, this can be found in the `net-misc/bridge-utils` package.



### 5.3.3.2.2. Dynamically created TAP interfaces

With this method, VirtualBox will create a TAP device every time the VM is started, and destroy the TAP device again when the VM is no longer running.

#### Note

In order to create a dynamic TAP interface, the VirtualBox process needs to have write access to `/dev/net/tun`. Either make sure the access bits allow access or add the user of the VirtualBox process to the group owning that device file.

As with the static interfaces described previously, the dynamically created TAP interfaces require a networking bridge and your Ethernet adapter in promiscuous mode. However, as opposed to the configuration for static devices, bridging with dynamically created devices effectively consists of two components:

1. There is one part that sets up an Ethernet bridge and puts your Ethernet controller in promiscuous mode; this needs to be performed only once after startup. For a setup with `eth0` and DHCP, the following commands (run as root) will perform these steps:

```
/sbin/brctl addbr br0
/sbin/ifconfig eth0 0.0.0.0 promisc
/sbin/brctl addif br0 eth0
/sbin/dhclient br0
```

2. A second part must be run by VirtualBox every time the TAP interface is created and destroyed, to add the interface to the bridge or remove it from the bridge, respectively. Since the names of the TAP interfaces (and your bridge) are not known at the time you are configuring your VM, VirtualBox instead calls two scripts that configure the TAP interfaces:
  - a. a **setup script**, which will be called by VirtualBox during VM startup, right after it has created the TAP interface; this script must then bring up that TAP interface (using `ifconfig up`) and add it to the bridge you have set up;
  - b. optionally, a **termination script**, which VirtualBox will call prior to destroying the TAP interface again.

So instead of adding a *static* TAP interface name to the bridge (as described earlier), you must supply one or two scripts that do this for the TAP devices created by VirtualBox. These scripts each receive two parameters:

- a. the interface file descriptor (numeric value  $\geq 0$ )
- b. the TAP interface name (typically from `tap0` to `tapx`)

Using the following TAP setup script for the above bridge configuration, the dynamically created host interface will be added to the bridge. Note that bridge manipulation requires root permissions.

```
#!/bin/sh
sudo /sbin/ifconfig $2 up
sudo /sbin/brctl addif br0 $2
```

The corresponding termination script looks as follows:

```
#!/bin/sh
sudo /sbin/brctl delif br0 $2
```

In certain configurations, the VirtualBox VM process (e.g. VirtualBox, VBoxSDL, or VBoxVRDP) is wrapped into a parent process which allocates the required TAP devices and lets VirtualBox inherit the file handles. For this to work, the file descriptor has to be passed to the VirtualBox VM configuration using `VBoxManage`. In this case, the setup and termination scripts will not be called.

### 5.3.4. Internal Networking

Internal Networking is similar to Host Interface Networking in that the VM can directly communicate with the outside world without the restrictions imposed by NAT. However, the "outside world" is limited to other VMs which connect to the same internal network.

Even though technically, everything that can be done using Internal Networking can also be done using Host Interface Networking, there are two good reasons why this extra mode was implemented:

1. **Security.** In Host Interface Networking mode, all traffic goes through an interface of the host system. It is therefore possible to attach a packet sniffer (such as Ethereal) to the host interface and log all traffic that goes over a given interface. If, for any reason, you prefer two or more VMs on the same machine to communicate privately, hiding their data from both the host system and the user, Host Interface Networking therefore is not an option.
2. **Speed.** Internal Networking is more efficient than Host Interface Networking, as VirtualBox can directly transmit the data without having to send it through the host operating system's networking stack.

Internal networks are created automatically as needed, i.e. there is no central configuration. Every internal network is identified simply by its name. In order to attach a VM's network card to an internal network, set its networking mode to "Internal Networking" and specify a network name. This can be done with the `VBoxManage modifyvm ... intnetX ...` command; see Section 6.1.5, "VBoxManage modifyvm".

Once there is more than one active virtual network card with the same internal network ID, the VirtualBox support driver will automatically "wire" the cards and act as a network switch. The VirtualBox support driver implements a complete Ethernet switch and supports both broadcast/multicast frames and promiscuous mode.

As a security measure, the Linux implementation of Internal Networking only allows VMs running under the same user ID to establish an internal network. For information on how to lift this restriction, contact InnoTek.

## 5.4. Folder Sharing

Shared Folders allow you to access files of your host system from within the guest system, much like ordinary shares on Windows networks would -- except that shared folders do not need a networking setup. Sharing is accomplished using a special service on the host and a file system driver for the guest, both of which are provided by VirtualBox.

In order to use this feature, the VirtualBox Guest Additions have to be installed. Currently, Shared Folders are limited to Windows XP, Windows 2000 and Linux 2.4 and 2.6 guests.

To declare a folder as shared to VirtualBox, you specify a certain path on the host (which will become the shared folder) and give it a "share name" that only VirtualBox will use. Using this share name, which the VirtualBox Shared Folders service will provide to the guest, a drive letter mapping can be performed in the guest.

Shares are created using the `VBoxManage` command line interface; see Section 6.1, "VBoxManage, the VirtualBox command line interface". The command is as follows:

```
VBoxManage sharedfolder add "VM name" -name "sharename" -hostpath "C:\test"
```

There are three types of shares:

1. global shares which are available to all VMs;
2. VM shares which are only available to the VM for which they have been defined;

- transient VM shares, which can be added and removed at runtime and do not persist after a VM has stopped; for these, add the `-transient` option to the above command line.

Then, you can mount the shared folder from inside a VM the same way as you would mount an ordinary network share:

- In a Windows guest, use the following command:

```
net use x: \\vboxsvr\sharename
```

Replace "x:" with the drive letter that you want to use for the share, and `sharename` with the share name specified with `VBoxManage`.

- In a Linux guest, use the following command:

```
mount -t vboxsf [-o OPTIONS] sharename mountpoint
```

Replace `sharename` with the share name specified with `VBoxManage`, and `mountpoint` with the path where you want the share to be mounted (e.g. `/mnt/share`). The usual mount rules apply, that is, create this directory first if it does not exist yet.

Beyond the standard options supplied by the `mount` command, the following `OPTIONS` are available:

```
iocharset CHARSET
```

to set the character set used for I/O operations (utf8 by default) and

```
convertcp CHARSET
```

to specify the character set used for the shared folder name (utf8 by default).

## 5.5. Remote Desktop Support (VRDP)

VirtualBox, the graphical user interface, has a built-in server for the VirtualBox Remote Desktop Protocol (VRDP). This allows you to see the output of a virtual machine's window remotely on any other computer and control the virtual machine from there, as if it was running on the remote machine.

VRDP is a backwards-compatible extension to Microsoft's Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP). Typically graphics updates and audio are sent from the remote machine to the client, while keyboard and mouse events are sent back.

The VRDP server built into VirtualBox is disabled by default, but can easily be enabled on a per-VM basis with `VBoxManage`:

```
VBoxManage modifyvm <vmname> -vrdp on
```

Additional settings for `modifyvm` are `-vrdpport` and `-vrdpauthtype`; see Section 6.1.5, “`VBoxManage modifyvm`” for details.

### 5.5.1. Authentication and Encryption

RDP features data stream encryption based on the RC4 symmetric cipher (with keys up to 128bit). The RC4 keys are being replaced in regular intervals (every 4096 packets).

RDP provides three different authentication methods:

1. Historically, RDP4 authentication was used where the RDP client does not perform any checks in order to verify the identity of the server it connects to. Using a man in the middle (MITM) attack, the user's credentials could be obtained. Therefore RDP4 authentication is insecure and should generally not be used.
2. RDP5.1 authentication employs a server certificate for which the client possesses the public key. This way, it is guaranteed that the server must possess the corresponding private key. However, this hardcoded private key became public some years ago and therefore RDP5.1 authentication must be considered to be insecure and should generally not be used.
3. RDP5.2 authentication is based on TLS 1.0 with customer supplied certificates. The server supplies a certificate to the client which must be signed by a certificate authority (CA) that the client trusts (for the Microsoft RDP Client 5.2, the CA has to be added to the Windows Trusted Root Certificate Authorities database). VirtualBox allows you to supply your own CA and server certificate and uses OpenSSL for encryption.

While VirtualBox supports all of the above, only RDP5.2 authentication should be used in environments where security is a concern.

### 5.5.2. Remote USB

As a special feature on top of the VRDP support, VirtualBox supports remote USB devices over the wire as well. That is, the VirtualBox guest that runs on one computer can access the USB devices of the remote computer on which the RDP data is being displayed the same way as USB devices that are connected to the actual host. This allows for running virtual machines on a VirtualBox host that acts as a server, where a client can connect from elsewhere that needs only a network adapter and a display capable of running an RDP viewer. When USB devices are plugged into the client, the remote VirtualBox server can access them.

For these remote USB devices, the same filter rules apply as for other USB devices, as described with Section 5.1.6.1, "USB settings". All you have to do is specify "Remote" (or "Any") when setting up these rules.

---

## Chapter 6. Alternative VirtualBox frontends

Due to VirtualBox clean, modular design, it is relatively painless to create an alternative frontend to the complex virtualization engine that is the core of VirtualBox. If VirtualBox, the graphical user interface described in Chapter 3, *Starting out with VirtualBox*, does not suit your needs, VirtualBox comes with several alternative frontends for certain scenarios. These are:

1. VBoxManage, which allows you to control all aspects of VirtualBox from the command line -- including those that the VirtualBox graphical user interface does not expose. This is described in the following chapter.
2. VBoxSDL, an alternative graphical front end based on SDL. This is described in Section 6.2, “VBoxSDL, the full-screen interface”.
3. VBoxVRDP, another frontend that produces no visible output on the host at all, but merely acts as a VRDP server; see Section 6.3, “VBoxVRDP, the headless VRDP server”.

### 6.1. VBoxManage, the VirtualBox command line interface

When running VBoxManage without parameters or when supplying an invalid command line, the syntax diagram will be shown. The Linux and Windows versions are slightly different, to reflect differences between these operating systems. Check the output of the VBoxManage command to for the commands available on a particular host system. The following diagram shows a superset of all commands understood by VBoxManage:

```
VirtualBox Command Line Management Interface Version 1.3.1
(C) 2005-2007 InnoTek Systemberatung GmbH
All rights reserved.
```

Usage:

```
VBoxManage list                vms|ostypes|hostdvs|hostfloppies|hostifs|
                               hdds|dvs|floppies|usbhost|usbfilters|
                               systemproperties

VBoxManage showvminfo          <uuid>|<name>

VBoxManage registervm          <filename>

VBoxManage unregistervm        <uuid>|<name>
                               [-delete]

VBoxManage createvm            -name <name>
                               [-register]
                               [-basefolder <path> | -settingsfile <path>]

VBoxManage modifyvm            <uuid>|<name>
                               [-name <name>]
                               [-ostype <ostype>]
                               [-memory <memorysize>]
                               [-vram <vramsize>]
                               [-acpi on|off]
                               [-ioapic on|off]
                               [-hwvirtex on|off|default]
                               [-bioslogofadein on|off]
                               [-bioslogofadeout on|off]
                               [-bioslogodisplaytime <msec>]
                               [-bioslogoimagepath <imagepath>]
                               [-biosbootmenu <disabled|menuonly|messageandmenu>]
                               [-boot<1-4> none|floppy|dvd|disk|net]
                               [-hd<a|b|d> none|<uuid>|<filename>]
                               [-dvd none|<uuid>|<filename>|host:<drive>]
                               [-dvdpasssthrough on|off]
```

	<code>[-floppy disabled empty &lt;uuid&gt;            &lt;filename&gt; host:&lt;drive&gt;] [-nic&lt;1-N&gt; none null nat hostif intnet] [-nictype&lt;1-N&gt; Am79C970A Am79C973] [-cableconnected&lt;1-N&gt; on off] [-nictrace&lt;1-N&gt; on off] [-nictracefile&lt;1-N&gt; &lt;filename&gt;] [-hostifdev&lt;1-N&gt; none &lt;devicename&gt;] [-intnet&lt;1-N&gt; network] [-macaddress&lt;1-N&gt; auto &lt;mac&gt; [-tapsetup&lt;1-N&gt; none &lt;application&gt;] [-tapterminate&lt;1-N&gt; none &lt;application&gt;] [-audio none null oss winmm dsound] [-vrdp on off] [-vrdpport default &lt;port&gt;] [-vrdpauthtype null external guest] [-usb on off] [-snapshotfolder default &lt;path&gt;]</code>
<code>VBoxManage startvm</code>	<code>&lt;uuid&gt; &lt;name&gt; [-type gui vrdp]</code>
<code>VBoxManage controlvm</code>	<code>&lt;uuid&gt; &lt;name&gt; pause resume reset poweroff savestate  acpipowerbutton   setlinkstate&lt;1-4&gt; on off   usbattach &lt;uuid&gt; &lt;address&gt;   usbdetach &lt;uuid&gt; &lt;address&gt;   dvattach none &lt;uuid&gt; &lt;filename&gt; host:&lt;drive&gt;   floppyattach none &lt;uuid&gt; &lt;filename&gt; host:&lt;drive&gt;   setvideomodehint &lt;xres&gt; &lt;yres&gt; &lt;bpp&gt;   setcredentials &lt;username&gt; &lt;password&gt; &lt;domain&gt;                   [-allowlocallogon &lt;yes no&gt;]</code>
<code>VBoxManage discardstate</code>	<code>&lt;uuid&gt; &lt;name&gt;</code>
<code>VBoxManage snapshot</code>	<code>&lt;uuid&gt; &lt;name&gt; take &lt;name&gt; [-desc &lt;desc&gt;]   discard &lt;uuid&gt; &lt;name&gt;   discardcurrent -state -all   edit &lt;uuid&gt; &lt;name&gt; -current           [-newname &lt;name&gt;]           [-newdesc &lt;desc&gt;]   showvminfo &lt;uuid&gt; &lt;name&gt;</code>
<code>VBoxManage registerimage</code>	<code>disk dvd floppy &lt;filename&gt; [-type normal immutable writethrough] (disk only)</code>
<code>VBoxManage unregisterimage</code>	<code>disk dvd floppy &lt;uuid&gt; &lt;filename&gt;</code>
<code>VBoxManage showvdiinfo</code>	<code>&lt;uuid&gt; &lt;filename&gt;</code>
<code>VBoxManage createvdi</code>	<code>-filename &lt;filename&gt; -size &lt;megabytes&gt; [-static] [-comment &lt;comment&gt;] [-register] [-type normal writethrough] (default: normal)</code>
<code>VBoxManage modifyvdi</code>	<code>&lt;uuid&gt; &lt;filename&gt; -type normal writethrough immutable</code>
<code>VBoxManage clonevdi</code>	<code>&lt;uuid&gt; &lt;filename&gt; &lt;outputfile&gt;</code>
<code>VBoxManage adddiscsidisk</code>	<code>-server &lt;name&gt; &lt;ip&gt; -target &lt;target&gt; [-port &lt;port&gt;] [-lun &lt;lun&gt;] [-username &lt;username&gt;] [-password &lt;password&gt;] [-comment &lt;comment&gt;]</code>
<code>VBoxManage createhostif</code>	<code>&lt;name&gt;</code>
<code>VBoxManage removehostif</code>	<code>&lt;uuid&gt; &lt;name&gt;</code>
<code>VBoxManage getextradata</code>	<code>global &lt;uuid&gt; &lt;name&gt;</code>

	<key> enumerate
VBoxManage setextradata	global <uuid> <name> <key> [<value>] (no value deletes key)
VBoxManage setproperty	vdifolder default <folder>   machinefolder default <folder>   vrdpauthlibrary default <library>   hwvirtexenabled yes no
VBoxManage usbfilter	add <index,0-N> -target <uuid> <name> global -name <string> -action ignore hold (global filters only) [-active yes no] (yes) [-vendorid <XXXX>] (null) [-productid <XXXX>] (null) [-revision <IIFF>] (null) [-manufacturer <string>] (null) [-product <string>] (null) [-remote yes no] (null, VM filters only) [-serialnumber <string>] (null)
VBoxManage usbfilter	modify <index,0-N> -target <uuid> <name> global [-name <string>] [-action ignore hold] (global filters only) [-active yes no] [-vendorid <XXXX> ""] [-productid <XXXX> ""] [-revision <IIFF> ""] [-manufacturer <string> ""] [-product <string> ""] [-remote yes no] (null, VM filters only) [-serialnumber <string> ""]
VBoxManage usbfilter	remove <index,0-N> -target <uuid> <name> global
VBoxManage sharedfolder	add <vmname> <uuid> -name <name> -hostpath <hostpath> [-transient]
VBoxManage sharedfolder	remove <vmname> <uuid> -name <name> [-transient]
VBoxManage updatesettings	[<dir> <file>] [-apply] [-nobackup] [-skipinvalid]

When invoking VBoxManage, only one command can be executed. However, a command might support several subcommands which then can be invoked in one single call. The following sections provide information on the different commands.

### 6.1.1. VBoxManage list

The `list` command gives relevant information about your system and information about VirtualBox's current settings.

The subcommands `vms`, `hdds`, `dvds` and `floppies` give you information about virtual machines and virtual disk images currently registered in VirtualBox, including all their settings, the unique identifiers (UUIDs) associated with them by VirtualBox and all files associated with them.

The subcommand `ostypes` lists guest OSes known to VirtualBox along with the identifier used to refer to them in the `modifyvm` command.

The subcommands `hostdvds`, `hostfloppies` and `hostifs` list DVD, floppy and host networking interfaces on the host, along with the name used to access them from within VirtualBox.

The `hostusb` subcommand supplies information about USB devices attached to the host, notably

information useful for constructing USB filters and whether they are currently in use by the host.

The subcommand `usbfilters` lists all global USB filters registered with VirtualBox - that is, filters for devices which are accessible to all virtual machines - and displays the filter parameters.

The `systemproperties` subcommand displays some global VirtualBox settings - minimum and maximum guest RAM and virtual hard disk size, folder settings and the current authentication library in use.

### 6.1.2. VBoxManage showvminfo

The `showvminfo` command shows information about a virtual machine, specified by name or by UUID (unique identifier). This is the same information as `VBoxManage list vms` shows for all virtual machines.

### 6.1.3. VBoxManage registervm / unregistervm

The `registervm` command allows you to import a virtual machine definition in an XML file into VirtualBox. There are some restrictions here - the machine must not conflict with one already registered in VirtualBox and it may not have any hard or removable disks attached. It is advisable to place the definition file in the machines folder before registering it.

The `unregistervm` command unregisters a virtual machine. If `-delete` is also specified then the XML definition file will be deleted.

### 6.1.4. VBoxManage createvm

This command creates a new virtual machine definition file, suitable for registering with VirtualBox using the `registervm` command. The `-name <name>` option is used to specify the name of the machine. Since this name is used by default as the file name of the settings file (with the extension `.xml`) and the machine folder (a subfolder of the `.VirtualBox/Machines` folder) it must be usable as a file name. In this case the file and folder names will change if the machine is renamed.

If the `-basefolder <path>` and the `-settingsfile <filename>` options are used, the XML definition file will be given the name `<filename>` and the machine folder will be named `<path>`. In this case, the names of the file and the folder will not change if the virtual machine is renamed. If the `-register` option is used, the machine will be registered with VirtualBox at once.

### 6.1.5. VBoxManage modifyvm

This command changes the properties of a registered virtual machine. The syntax summary at the top of the chapter shows all parameters which can be changed (a few of these may not be available on a particular host operating system). We will restrict ourselves to describing some of the more advanced options here. See the chapter "Starting out with VirtualBox", and the option summary at the end of that chapter, for a description of the rest.

`-hwxrtex` enables or disables the use of virtualization extensions in the processor of your host system. This feature may still be experimental at the time you read this, and may not be enabled in your build of VirtualBox.

`-bioslogofadein`, `-bioslogofadeout` and `-bioslogoimagepath` allow you to control whether the logo shown when the virtual machine starts fades in and out, and to use your own logo image if you so desire. The image must be in an uncompressed 256 color BMP file.

`-dvdassthrough` enables DVD writing support (currently experimental; see Section 5.1.3, "CD/DVD-ROM and floppy settings").

`-nic<1-4>` allows you to change the way the virtual network adaptors interface with the host. They can be not present (none), not connected to the host (null), use network address translation (nat), a host interface (hostif) or communicate with other virtual machines using internal networking (intnet). See Section 5.3, "Networking in virtual machines" for detailed instructions.

`-nictype` allows you to specify whether the host will see the network adaptors as 10 Mbps AMD



PCnet 79C970A cards or as 100Mbps 79C973 cards. This is in fact purely cosmetic, as both virtual cards run at full speed.

`-nictrace<1-4>` allows you to trace the traffic on the specified network interface. This option must be combined with `-nictracefile<1-4>` which says where the data should be saved.

`-hostifdev<1-4>` allows you to specify which host interface the given virtual network interface will use for communication with the host when it is set up in host interface mode (otherwise this setting has no effect). For Windows hosts, this should be the name of a VirtualBox host interface which you have created using the `createhostif` command (see Section 5.3.3.1, “Bridging on Windows hosts”). For Linux hosts, this should be the name of an existing static interface or `none` if you wish to allocate an interface dynamically. In the latter case, you should also specify the creation and termination scripts for the interface with `-tapsetup<1-4>` and `-tapterminate<1-4>` (see Section 5.3.3.2, “Bridging on Linux hosts”).

`-intnet<1-4> <network>` allows you to specify an network name for Internal Networking (see Section 5.3.4, “Internal Networking”).

`-vrdp` allows you to enable or disable access to this machine via the VirtualBox RDP server. `-vrdpport` lets you specify which port should be used, or to use the default. Only one machine can use a given port (or the default) at a time. `-vrdpauthtype` allows you to choose whether authorization will be performed by VirtualBox, by an external library or not at all. See Section 5.5, “Remote Desktop Support (VRDP)” for an introduction to VRDP.

`-snapshotfolder` allows you to specify the folder in which snapshots will be kept for this machine.

### 6.1.6. VBoxManage startvm

This command starts a virtual machine. The optional `-type` specifier determines whether the machine will be started in a window (GUI mode) or whether the output should go through VirtualBox's VRDP server.

### 6.1.7. VBoxManage controlvm

The `controlvm` command allows you to perform operations on a running virtual machine. The `pause`, `resume`, `reset` and `poweroff` operations do what they say.

The `savestate` operation saves the state of the machine and stops it. It can be restarted using `startvm` and will continue from the state it was in before saving.

The `setlinkstate<1-4>` operation connects or disconnects virtual network cables from their network interfaces.

`usbattach` and `usbdetach` make host USB devices visible to the virtual machine on the fly, without the need for creating filters first. The USB devices can be specified by UUID (unique identifier) or by address on the host system. The command `list usbhost` can be used to locate this information.

`dvdattach` inserts a DVD image into the virtual machine or connects it to the host DVD drive. The image file does not have to be registered with VirtualBox. The command `list hostdvds` can be used to display the drives found on the host, and the names VirtualBox uses to access them. `floppyattach` works in a similar way.

`setvideomodehint` requests that the guest system change to a particular video mode. This requires that the guest additions be installed, and will not work for all guest systems.

The `setcredentials` operation is used for remote logons in Windows guests. See the chapter “The VirtualBox Guest Additions” and the section “Automated Windows logons”.

### 6.1.8. VBoxManage discardstate

This command discards the saved state of a virtual machine which is not currently running, which

will cause its operating system to restart next time you start it. This is the equivalent of pulling out the power cable on a physical machine, and should be avoided if possible.

### 6.1.9. VBoxManage snapshot

This command is used for taking snapshots of a virtual machine and for manipulating and discarding snapshots. The `take` operation takes a snapshot of a virtual machine. You must supply a name for the snapshot and can optionally supply a description. The `discard` operation discards a snapshot specified by name or by identifier (UUID). The `discardcurrent` operation will either revert the current state to the most recent snapshot (if you specify the `-state` option) or discard the last snapshot and revert to the last but one (with the `-all` option).

### 6.1.10. VBoxManage registerimage / unregisterimage

These commands register or unregister hard disk, DVD or floppy images in VirtualBox. For registering, this is the equivalent of adding the images in the Disk Image Manager in the graphical interface. Note however that when you unregister a hard disk image using `VBoxManage`, it will not be deleted from the host computer's hard drive.

### 6.1.11. VBoxManage showvdiinfo

This command shows information about a virtual hard disk image, notably its size, its size on disk, its type and the VM it is in use by.

### 6.1.12. VBoxManage createvdi

This command creates a new virtual hard disk image. You must specify the filename for the new image and the virtual size. If you give the `-static` option, disk space for the whole image will be allocated at once on the host. With the `-comment` option you can attach a comment to the image. The `-register` option, if given, tells VirtualBox to register the image for use with virtual machines. You can use the `-type` option to create a write-through disk. Write accesses to write-through disks go straight through to the disk, and these disks are not included in snapshots.

### 6.1.13. VBoxManage modifyvdi

The `modifyvdi` command can be used to change the type of a virtual disk image between normal, write-through and immutable, where immutable disks are read-only and can be shared between several virtual machines. Only registered images can be set to immutable, as the property is set in VirtualBox's configuration and not in the disk image file itself.

### 6.1.14. VBoxManage clonevdi

This command duplicates a registered virtual hard disk image to a new image file with a new unique identifier (UUID). The new image can be transferred to another host system or imported into VirtualBox again using the Virtual Disk Manager; see Section 3.5, “The Virtual Disk Manager”.

### 6.1.15. VBoxManage addiscsidisk

The `addiscsidisk` command attaches an iSCSI network storage unit to VirtualBox. The iSCSI target can then be made available to and used by a virtual machine as though it were a standard write-through virtual disk image.

This command has the following syntax:

```
VBoxManage addiscsidisk -server <name>|<ip>
                        -target <target>
                        [-port <port>]
                        [-lun <lun>]
                        [-username <username>]
                        [-password <password>]
                        [-comment <comment>]
```

where the parameters mean:

server	The host name or IP address of the iSCSI target.
target	Target name string. This is determined by the iSCSI target and used to identify the storage resource.
port	TCP/IP port number of the iSCSI service on the target (optional).
lun	Logical Unit Number of the target resource (optional). Often, this value is zero.
username, password	Username and password for target authentication, if required (optional).

### Note

Currently, username and password are stored without encryption (i.e. in cleartext) in the machine configuration file.

comment	Any description that you want to have stored with this item (optional; e.g. "Big storage server downstairs"). This is stored internally only and not needed for operation.
---------	--

## 6.1.16. VBoxManage createhostif/removehostif

These two commands add and remove, respectively, virtual network interfaces on Windows hosts. See Section 5.3.3.1, “Bridging on Windows hosts” for details.

## 6.1.17. VBoxManage getextradata/setextradata

These commands let you attach and retrieve string data to a virtual machine or to a VirtualBox configuration (by specifying `global` instead of a virtual machine name). You must specify a key (as a text string) to associate the data with, which you can later use to retrieve it. For example:

```
VBoxManage setextradata Fedora5 installdate 2006.01.01
VBoxManage setextradata SUSE10 installdate 2006.02.02
```

would associate the string "2006.01.01" with the key `installdate` for the virtual machine `Fedora5`, and "2006.02.02" on the machine `SUSE10`. You could retrieve the information as follows:

```
VBoxManage getextradata Fedora5 installdate
```

which would return

```
VirtualBox Command Line Management Interface Version 1.2.1
(C) 2005-2006 InnoTek Systemberatung GmbH
All rights reserved.
```

```
Value: 2006.01.01
```

## 6.1.18. VBoxManage setproperty

This command is used to change settings which affect the entire VirtualBox installation. You can change the folder used to keep virtual hard disk images (`vdifolder`), the folder in which virtual machine definitions are kept by default (`machinefolder`), the library used to perform RDP authentication (`vrdpauthlibrary`, see the chapter "Working with Guest Operating Systems") and whether or not hardware virtualization support is enabled by default (`hwvirtexenabled`. TODO Note that this feature may still be experimental at the time you read this).

### 6.1.19. VBoxManage usbfilter add/modify/remove

The `usbfilter` commands are used for working with USB filters in virtual machines, or global filters which affect the whole VirtualBox setup. Global filters are applied before machine-specific filters, and may be used to prevent devices from being captured by any virtual machine. Global filters are always applied in a particular order, and only the first filter which fits a device is applied. So for example, if the first global filter says to hold (make available) a particular Kingston memory stick device and the second to ignore all Kingston devices, that memory stick will be available to any machine with an appropriate filter, but no other Kingston device will.

When creating a USB filter using `usbfilter add`, you must supply three or four mandatory parameters. The `index` specifies the position in the list at which the filter should be placed. If there is already a filter at that position, then it and the following ones will be shifted back one place. Otherwise the new filter will be added onto the end of the list. The `target` parameter selects the virtual machine that the filter should be attached to or "global". `name` is a name for the new filter and for global filters, `action` says whether to allow machines access to devices that fit the filter description ("hold") or not to give them access ("ignore"). In addition, you should specify parameters to filter by. You can find the parameters for devices attached to your system using `VBoxManage list usbhost`. Finally, you can specify whether the filter should be active, and for local filters, whether they are for local devices, `remote` (over an RDP connection) or either.

When you modify a USB filter using `usbfilter modify`, you must specify the filter by index (see the output of `VBoxManage list usbfilters` to find global filter indexes and that of `VBoxManage showvminfo` to find indexes for individual machines) and by target, which is either a virtual machine or "global". The properties which can be changed are the same as for `usbfilter add`. To remove a filter, use `usbfilter remove` and specify the index and the target.

### 6.1.20. VBoxManage sharedfolder add/remove

This command allows you to share folders on the host computer with guest operating systems. For this, the guest systems must have a version of the VirtualBox guest additions installed which supports this functionality.

Shared folders are described in detail in Section 5.4, "Folder Sharing".

### 6.1.21. VBoxManage updatesettings

The `updatesettings` command updates all VirtualBox configuration files from an earlier to the current version. You will need this when you upgrade your version of VirtualBox, but should not need it apart from that.

## 6.2. VBoxSDL, the full-screen interface

(TODO still to be documented)

## 6.3. VBoxVRDP, the headless VRDP server

(TODO still to be documented)

Note that when starting the headless interface through `VBoxManage` or programmatically using the API, you will not be able to view or log possible screen output by the `VBoxVRDP` executables. In case of (startup) errors, such output might be desirable for problem diagnosis. In order to get screen output, start `VBoxVRDP` directly:

```
VBoxVRDP -startvm <uuid|name>
```

---

# Chapter 7. Advanced Topics

## 7.1. VirtualBox configuration data

For each system user, VirtualBox stores configuration data in the user's home directory, as per the conventions of the host operating system; this is `$HOME/.VirtualBox` on Linux and `%HOMEDRIVE%%HOMEPATH%\.VirtualBox` on Windows.<sup>1</sup> VirtualBox creates the configuration directory automatically, if necessary. Optionally, you can supply an alternate configuration directory by setting the `VBOX_USER_HOME` environment variable.

VirtualBox stores all its global and machine-specific configuration data in XML documents. We intentionally do not document the specifications of these files, as we must reserve the right to modify them in the future. We therefore request that these files not be edited manually. VirtualBox provides complete access to its configuration data through its Application Programming Interface (API) and the `VBoxManage` command line tool; see Section 6.1, “VBoxManage, the VirtualBox command line interface”.

In the configuration directory, `VirtualBox.xml` is the main configuration file. This includes global configuration options and the media and virtual machine registry. The media registry links to all CD/DVD, floppy and disk images that have been added to the Virtual Disk Manager. For each registered VM, there is one entry which points to the VM configuration file, also in XML format.

You can globally change some of the locations where VirtualBox keeps extra configuration and data by selecting “Global settings” from the “File” menu in the VirtualBox main window. Then, in the window that pops up, click on the “General” tab.

- Virtual machine settings and files are, by default, saved as XML files in a subdirectory of the `.VirtualBox/Machines` directory. You can change the location of this main “Machines” folder in the “Global settings” dialog.

By default, for each virtual machine, VirtualBox uses another subdirectory of the “Machines” directory that carries the same name as the virtual machine. As a result, your virtual machine names must conform to the conventions of your operating system for valid file names. For example, a machine called “Fedora 6” would, by default, have its settings saved in `.VirtualBox/Machines/Fedora 6/Fedora 6.xml`. If you would like more control over the file names used, you can create the machine using `VBoxManage createvm` with the `-settingsfile` option; see Section 6.1.4, “VBoxManage createvm”.

The virtual machine directory will be renamed if you change the machine name. If you do not wish this to happen, you can create the machine using `VBoxManage createvm` with the `-basefolder` option. In this case, the folder name will never change.

- VirtualBox keeps snapshots and saved states in another special folder for each virtual machine. By default, this is a subfolder of the virtual machine folder called `Snapshots` -- in our example, `.VirtualBox/Machines/Fedora 6/Snapshots`. You can change this setting for each machine using `VBoxManage` as well.
- VDI container files are, by default, created in the `.VirtualBox/VDI` directory. In particular, this directory is used when the “Create new virtual disk” wizard is started to create a new VDI file. Changing this default is probably most useful if the disk containing your home directory does not have enough room to hold your VDI files, which can grow very large.

## 7.2. Automated Windows Guest Logons (VBoxGINA)

---

<sup>1</sup>Typically `C:\Documents and Settings\Username`.

When Windows is running in a virtual machine, it might be desirable to perform coordinated and automated logons of guest operating systems using credentials<sup>2</sup> from a master logon system. Since Windows NT, Windows has provided a modular system logon subsystem ("Winlogon") which can be customized and extended by means of so-called GINA modules (Graphical Identification and Authentication). The VirtualBox Guest Additions for Windows come with such a GINA module which can therefore perform automated logons.

The Guest Additions installer copies VBoxGINA.dll to the target directory but doesn't activate it. In order to install it, it has to be copied to the SYSTEM32 directory of Windows and the string registry key `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Winlogon\GinaDLL` has to be created and set to VBoxGINA.dll. The VirtualBox GINA is implemented as a wrapper around the standard Windows GINA (MSGINA.DLL) so it will most likely not work correctly with 3rd party GINA modules.

Credentials can be set only for running VMs and are transient information, i.e. they are not stored in any persistent manner. Setting credentials can be achieved using the following command:

```
VBoxManage controlvm "Windows XP" \  
    setcredentials "John Doe" "secretpassword" "DOMTEST"
```

The above information will then be available to the guest and will be queried by the VirtualBox GINA module using the VirtualBox Guest Additions device driver. When Windows is in logged out mode, the GINA module will constantly poll for credentials and if they are present, a logon will be attempted. After retrieving the credentials, the GINA module will erase them so that the above command will have to be repeated for subsequent logons.

When resetting a VM, the credentials will be erased for security reasons. Note that this is a write only value, i.e. there is no way to retrieve the credentials from the host side. Credentials can be reset from the host side by setting empty values.

For Windows XP guests, the logon subsystem has to be configured to use the classical logon dialog as the VirtualBox GINA does not support the XP style welcome dialog.

## 7.3. Secure Labeling with VBoxSDL

When running guest operating systems in fullscreen mode, the guest operating system usually has control over the whole screen. This could present a security risk as the guest operating system might fool the user into thinking that it is either a different system (which might have a higher security level) or it might present messages on the screen that appear to stem from the host operating system.

In order to protect the user against the abovementioned security risks, the secure labeling feature has been developed. Secure labeling is currently available only for VBoxSDL. When enabled, a portion of the display area is reserved for a label in which a user defined message is displayed. The label height is set to 20 pixels in VBoxSDL. The label font color and background color can be optionally set as hexadecimal RGB color values. The following syntax is used to enable secure labeling:

```
VBoxSDL -securelabel -seclabelfnt ~/fonts/arial.ttf \  
    -seclabelsiz 14 "Windows XP" \  
    -seclabelfbcol 00FF00 -seclabelbgcol 00FFFF
```

In addition to enabling secure labeling, a TrueType font has to be supplied.

Typically, full screen resolutions are limited to certain "standard" geometries such as 1024 x 768. Adding the secure label with a height of 20 pixels would therefore require the resolution to be 1024 x 788 which is either not possible for results in suboptimal display quality. In most cases, VBoxSDL would choose the next higher resolution, e.g. 1280 x 1024 and the guest's screen would not cover the whole display surface. If VBoxSDL is unable to choose a higher resolution, the secure label will be

---

<sup>2</sup>The term credentials commonly refers to logon information consisting of user name, password and domain name, where each value might be empty.

painted on top of the guest's screen surface. In order to address this problem, a feature called "Y offset" has been implemented. This takes the height of the secure label and provides custom video modes to the guest that are reduced by the height of the label so that guest height + label height results in a valid native display resolution. For Windows guests, the VirtualBox Guest Additions automatically provide the reduced video modes. In addition to that, the VESA BIOS has been adjusted to duplicate its standard mode table with adjusted resolutions. The adjusted mode IDs can be calculated using the following formula:

```
reduced_modeid = modeid + 0x30
```

For example, in order to start Linux with 1024 x 748 x 16, the standard mode 0x117 (1024 x 768 x 16) is used as a base. The Linux video mode kernel parameter can then be calculated using:

```
vga = 0x200 | 0x117 + 0x30  
vga = 839
```

The reason for duplicating the standard modes instead of only supplying the adjusted modes is that most guest operating systems require the standard VESA modes to be fixed and refuse to start with different modes.

When using the X.org VESA driver, custom modelines have to be calculated and added to the configuration (usually in `/etc/X11/xorg.conf`). A handy tool to determine modeline entries can be found at <http://www.tkk.fi/Misc/Electronics/faq/vga2rgb/calc.html>.

## 7.4. Custom VESA resolutions

Apart from the standard VESA resolutions, the VirtualBox VESA BIOS allows you to add up to 16 custom video modes which will be reported to the guest operating system. When using Windows guests with the VirtualBox Guest Additions, a custom graphics driver will be used instead of the fallback VESA solution so this information does not apply.

Additional video modes can be configured for each VM using the extra data facility. The extra data key is called `CustomVideoMode` with `x` being a number from 1 to 16. Please note that modes will be read from 1 until either the following number is not defined for 16 is reached. The following example adds a video mode that corresponds to the native display resolution of many notebook computers:

```
VBoxManage setextradata "Windows XP" \  
    "CustomVideoMode1" "1400x1050x16"
```

The VESA mode IDs for custom video modes start at 0x160. In order to use the above defined custom video mode, the following command line has to be supplied to Linux:

```
vga = 0x200 | 0x160  
vga = 864
```

For guest operating systems with VirtualBox Guest Additions, a custom video mode can be set using the video mode hint feature.

## 7.5. Releasing modifiers with VBoxSDL on Linux

When switching from a X virtual terminal (VT) to another VT using Ctrl-Alt-Fx while the VBoxSDL window has the input focus, the guest will receive Ctrl and Alt keypress events without receiving the corresponding key release events. This is an architectural limitation of Linux. In order to reset the modifier keys, it is possible to send `SIGUSR1` to the VBoxSDL main thread (first entry in the `ps` list). For example, when switching away to another VT and saving the virtual machine from this terminal, the following sequence can be used to make sure the VM is not saved with stuck modifiers:

```
kill -usr1 <pid>
```

```
./VBoxManage controlvm "Windows 2000" savestate
```



---

# Chapter 8. VirtualBox Application Programming Interfaces

## 8.1. Microsoft COM interface

## 8.2. XPCOM interface

## 8.3. VRDP Authentication

VirtualBox provides access to virtual machines using the VirtualBox Remote Desktop Protocol (VRDP). In order to address security requirements, VirtualBox both provides standard authentication targets and an SDK to develop custom authentication modules. A global system property controls the name of the VRDP authentication library to use. The default library is `VRDPAuth.so` on Linux and `VRDPAuth.dll` on Windows which perform authentication against PAM and WinLogon respectively.

For each VM, the VRDP authentication method can be set individually. The following options exist:

- NULL authentication providing access to all clients.
- External authentication through a VRDP authentication library.
- Guest authentication where the choice is made by a Guest Additions component.

External authentication is the most flexible as the external handler can both choose to grant access to everyone (like NULL authentication) and delegate the request to the guest authentication component. When delegating the request to the guest component, it will still be called afterwards with the option to override the result.

The external authentication library will be loaded by the VM process on demand, i.e. when the first RDP connection is made by an external client.

A VRDP authentication library is required to implement one entry point:

```
#include "VRDPAuth.h"

/**
 * Authentication library entry point. Decides whether to allow
 * a client connection.
 *
 * Parameters:
 *
 *   pUuid          Pointer to the UUID of the virtual machine
 *                   which the client connected to.
 *   guestJudgement Result of the guest authentication.
 *   szUser          User name passed in by the client (UTF8).
 *   szPassword      Password passed in by the client (UTF8).
 *   szDomain        Domain passed in by the client (UTF8).
 *
 * Return code:
 *
 *   VRDPAuthAccessDenied Client access has been denied.
 *   VRDPAuthAccessGranted Client has the right to use the
 *                           virtual machine.
 *   VRDPAuthDelegateToGuest Guest operating system must
 *                             authenticate the client and the
 *                             library must be called again with
 *                             the result of the guest
 *                             authentication.
 */
```

```
VRDPAuthResult VRDPAUTHCALL VRDPAuth(  
    PVRDPAUTHUUID pUuid,  
    VRDPAuthGuestJudgement guestJudgement,  
    const char *szUser,  
    const char *szPassword  
    const char *szDomain)  
{  
    /* process request against your authentication source of choice */  
    return VRDPAuthAccessGranted;  
}
```

The second arguments contains information about the guest authentication status. For the first call, it is always set to `VRDPAuthGuestNotAsked`. In case the function returns `VRDPAuthDelegateToGuest`, a guest authentication will be attempted and another call to the method is made with its result. This can be either granted / denied or no judgement (the guest component chose for whatever reason to not make a decision). In case there is a problem with the guest authentication module (e.g. the Additions are not installed or not running or the guest did not respond within a timeout), the "not reacted" status will be returned.

---

# Chapter 9. Troubleshooting

This chapter provides answers to commonly asked questions. In order to improve your user experience with VirtualBox, it is recommended to read this section to learn more about common pitfalls and get recommendations on how to use the product.

## 9.1. All host operating systems

### 9.1.1. Windows boot failures

Often, customers encounter Windows startup failures (the infamous "blue screen") after performing configuration changes to a virtual machine which are not allowed for an already installed Windows operating system. Depending on the presence of several hardware features, the Windows installation program chooses special kernel and device driver versions and will fail to startup should these hardware features be removed.

Most importantly, never disable ACPI and the I/O APIC if they were enabled at installation time. Enabling them for a Windows VM which was installed without them does not cause any harm. However, Windows will not use these features in this case.

### 9.1.2. Windows 2000 installation failures

When installing Windows 2000 guests, you might run into one of the following issues:

- Installation reboots, usually during component registration.
- Installation fills the whole hard disk with empty log files.
- Installation complains about a failure installing `msgina.dll`.

These problems are all caused by a bug in the hard disk driver of Windows 2000. After issuing a hard disk request, there is a race condition in the Windows driver code which leads to corruption if the operation completes too fast, i.e. the hardware interrupt from the IDE controller arrives too soon. With physical hardware, there is a guaranteed delay in most systems so the problem is usually hidden there (however it should be possible to reproduce it on physical hardware as well). In a virtual environment, it is possible for the operation to be done immediately (especially on very fast systems with multiple CPUs) and the interrupt is signalled sooner than on a physical system. The solution is to introduce an artificial delay before delivering such interrupts. This delay can be configured for a VM using the following command:

```
VBoxManage setextradata <vmname>  
"VBoxInternal/Devices/piix3ide/0/Config/IRQDelay" 1
```

This sets the delay to one millisecond. In case this doesn't help, increase it to a value between 1 and 5 milliseconds. Please note that this slows down disk performance. After installation, you should be able to remove the key (or set it to 0).

### 9.1.3. Halt VM on reboot (Windows bluescreen)

When Windows guests run into a kernel crash, they display the infamous bluescreen. Depending on how Windows is configured, the information will remain on the screen until the machine is restarted or it will reboot automatically. During installation, Windows is usually configured to reboot automatically. With automatic reboots, there is no chance to record the bluescreen information which might be important for problem determination.

VirtualBox provides a method of halting a guest when it wants to perform a reset. In order to enable this feature, issue the following command:

```
VBoxManage setextradata <vmname>
    "VBoxInternal/PDM/HaltOnReset" 1
```

### 9.1.4. Guest shows IDE errors for VDI on slow host file system

Some host file systems provide occasionally very poor writing performance and as a consequence cause the guest to time out IDE commands. This is normal behavior and should normally cause no real problems, as the guest should repeat commands that have timed out. However some guests (e.g. some Linux versions) have severe problems if a write to a VDI file takes longer than about 15 seconds. Some file systems however require more than a minute to complete a single write, if the host cache contains a large amount of data that needs to be written.

The symptom for this problem is that the guest can no longer access its files during large write or copying operations, usually leading to an immediate hang of the guest.

In order to work around this problem (the true fix is to use a faster file system that doesn't exhibit such unacceptable write performance), it is possible to flush the VDI after a certain amount of data has been written. This interval is normally infinite, but can be configured individually for each disk of a VM using the following command:

```
VBoxManage setextradata <vmname>
    "VBoxInternal/Devices/piix3ide/0/LUN#[x]/Config/FlushInterval" [b]
```

The value [x] that selects the disk is 0 for the master device on the first channel, 1 for the slave device on the first channel, 2 for the master device on the second channel or 3 for the master device on the second channel. Only disks support this configuration option. It must not be set for CD-ROM drives.

The unit of the interval [b] is the number of bytes written since the last flush. The value for it must be selected so that the occasional long write delays do not occur. Since the proper flush interval depends on the performance of the host and the host filesystem, finding the optimal value that makes the problem disappear requires some experimentation. Values between 1000000 and 10000000 (1 to 10 megabytes) are a good starting point. Decreasing the interval both decreases the probability of the problem and the write performance of the guest. Setting the value unnecessarily low will cost performance without providing any benefits. An interval of 1 will cause a flush for each write operation and should solve the problem in any case, but has a severe write performance penalty.

Providing a value of 0 for [b] is treated as an infinite flush interval, effectively disabling this work-around. Removing the extra data key by specifying no value for [b] has the same effect.

### 9.1.5. Responding to guest IDE flush requests

If desired, the virtual disk images (VDI) can be flushed when the guest issues the IDE FLUSH CACHE command. Normally these requests are ignored for improved performance. To enable flushing, issue the following command:

```
VBoxManage setextradata <vmname>
    "VBoxInternal/Devices/piix3ide/0/LUN#[x]/Config/IgnoreFlush" 0
```

The value [x] that selects the disk is 0 for the master device on the first channel, 1 for the slave device on the first channel, 2 for the master device on the second channel or 3 for the master device on the second channel. Only disks support this configuration option. It must not be set for CD-ROM drives.

Note that this doesn't affect the flushes performed according to the configuration in section 9.1.4. Restoring the default of ignoring flush commands is possible by setting the value to 1 or by removing the key.

### 9.1.6. Collecting debugging information

For problem determination, it is often important to collect debugging information which can be analyzed by VirtualBox support. This section contains information about what kind of information can be obtained.

At every VM startup, a log file is created containing some information about the VM configuration and runtime events. The log file is called `VBox.log` and resides in the VM snapshot folder (typically `$HOME/.VirtualBox/Machines/{uuid}`). When starting a VM, the configuration file of the last run will be renamed to `.1`, up to `.3`. Sometimes when there is a problem, it is useful to have a look at the configuration. Also when requesting support for VirtualBox, supplying the corresponding log file is mandatory.

### 9.1.7. Startup errors due to configuration file errors

## 9.2. Windows hosts

### 9.2.1. VBoxSVC out-of-process COM server issues

VirtualBox makes use of the Microsoft Component Object Model (COM) for inter and intra process communication. This allows VirtualBox to share a common configuration among different virtual machine processes and provide several user interface options based on a common architecture. All global status information and configuration is maintained by the process `VBoxSVC.exe` which is an out-of-process COM server. Whenever a VirtualBox process is started, it requests access to the COM server and Windows automatically starts the process. Note that it should never be started by the end user.

When the last process disconnects from the COM server, it will terminate itself after some seconds. The VirtualBox configuration (XML files) is maintained and owned by the COM server and the files are locked whenever the server runs.

In some cases - such as when a virtual machine is terminated unexpectedly - the COM server might not notice that the client is disconnected and stay active. In other rare cases the COM server might experience an internal error and subsequently other processes fail to initialize it. In these situations, it is recommended to use the Windows task manager to kill the process `VBoxSVC.exe`.

### 9.2.2. CD/DVD changes not recognized

In case you have assigned a physical CD/DVD drive to a guest and the guest does not notice when the medium changes, make sure that the Windows media change notification (MCN) feature is not turned off. This is a key in the Windows registry (`HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Services\Cdrom\Autorun`) which certain applications may disable against Microsoft's advice. If it is set to 0, change it to 1 and reboot your system. VirtualBox relies on Windows notifying it of media changes.

### 9.2.3. Sluggish response when using Microsoft RDP client

If connecting to a Virtual Machine via the Microsoft RDP client (called Remote Desktop Connection), there can be large delays between input (moving the mouse over a menu is the most obvious situation) and output. This is because this RDP client collects input for a certain time before sending it to the VRDP server built into VirtualBox.

The interval can be decreased by setting a Windows registry key to smaller values than the default of 100. The key does not exist initially and must be of type `DWORD`. The unit for its values is milliseconds. Values around 20 are suitable for low-bandwidth connections between the RDP client and server. Values around 4 can be used for a gigabit Ethernet connection. Generally values below 10 achieve a performance that is very close to that of the local input devices and screen of the host on which the Virtual Machine is running.

Depending whether the setting should be changed for an individual user or for the system, either

`HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Terminal Server`

Client\Min Send Interval

or

HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Terminal Server  
Client\Min Send Interval

can be set appropriately.

## 9.2.4. Running an iSCSI initiator and target on a single system

If attempting to access an iSCSI target running in a guest virtual machine with an iSCSI initiator (e.g. Microsoft iSCSI Initiator) running on the host system, a deadlock occurs in the host OS. This is caused by a flaw in the Windows cache manager component, and causes sluggish host system response for several minutes, followed by a "Delayed Write Failed" error message in the system tray or in a separate message window. The guest is blocked during that period and may show error messages or become unstable. VirtualBox contains a workaround for this problem until Microsoft addresses the issue.

It is activated by setting the environment variable `VBOX_DISABLE_HOST_DISK_CACHE` to 1. This can be achieved e.g. by executing the following command in a command prompt window before starting VirtualBox in the same command prompt window:

```
set VBOX_DISABLE_HOST_DISK_CACHE=1
```

This decreases performance of guest disk accesses (especially writes). It does not affect the performance of other applications running on the host operating system.

## 9.3. Linux hosts

### 9.3.1. Strange guest IDE error messages when writing to CD/DVD

If the experimental CD/DVD writer support is enabled with an incorrect VirtualBox, host or guest configuration, it is possible that any attempt to access the CD/DVD writer fails and simply results in guest kernel error messages (for Linux guests) or application error messages (for Windows guests). VirtualBox performs the usual consistency checks when a VM is powered up (in particular it aborts with an error message if the device for the CD/DVD writer is not writable by the user starting the VM), but it cannot detect all misconfigurations. The necessary host and guest OS configuration is not specific for VirtualBox, but a few frequent problems are listed here which occurred in connection with VirtualBox.

Special care must be taken to use the correct device. The configured host CD/DVD device file name (in most cases `/dev/cdrom`) must point to the device that allows writing to the CD/DVD unit. For CD/DVD writer units connected to a SCSI controller or to a IDE controller that interfaces to the Linux SCSI subsystem (common for some SATA controllers), this must refer to the SCSI device node (e.g. `/dev/scd0`). Even for IDE CD/DVD writer units this must refer to the appropriate SCSI CD-ROM device node (e.g. `/dev/scd0`) if the `ide-scsi` kernel module is loaded. This module is required for CD/DVD writer support with all Linux 2.4 kernels and some early 2.6 kernels. Many Linux distributions load this module whenever a CD/DVD writer is detected in the system, even if the kernel would support CD/DVD writers without the module. VirtualBox supports the use of IDE device files (e.g. `/dev/hdc`), provided the kernel supports this and the `ide-scsi` module is not loaded.

Similar rules (except that within the guest the CD/DVD writer is always an IDE device) apply to the guest configuration. Since this setup is very common, it is likely that the default configuration of the guest works as expected.

### 9.3.2. VBoxSVC IPC issues

On Linux, VirtualBox makes use of a custom version of Mozilla XPCOM (cross platform component object model) for inter and intra process communication. The process `VBoxSVC` serves as a communication hub between different VirtualBox processes and maintains the global configuration, i.e. the XML database. When starting a VirtualBox component, the processes `VBoxSVC` and `VirtualBoxXPCOMIPCD` are started automatically. They are only accessible from the user account they are running under. `VBoxSVC` owns the VirtualBox configuration database which normally resides in `~/.VirtualBox` and while it is running, the configuration files are locked. Communication between the various VirtualBox components and `VBoxSVC` is performed through a local domain socket residing in `/tmp/.vbox-<username>-ipc`. In case there are communication problems (i.e. a VirtualBox application cannot communicate with `VBoxSVC`), terminate the daemons and remove the local domain socket directory.

---

# Chapter 10. ChangeLog

This section summarizes the changes between VirtualBox versions. Note that this is not a detailed changelog and not all changes are listed. VirtualBox version numbers consist of three numbers separated by dots where the first number represents the major version, the 2nd number the minor version and the 3rd one the build number. Build numbers of official releases are always even. An odd build number represents an internal development or test build.

## 10.1. Version 1.3.2 (2007-01-15)

- General: Added experimental support for Windows Vista as a host
- General: Added support for Windows Vista as a guest
- GUI: numerous improvements including a redesigned media manager
- BIOS: added DMI information for recent Linux kernels
- VMM: experimental support for AMD SVM hardware virtualization extensions
- VMM: significant performance improvements for Linux 2.6 guests
- VMM: performance improvements for Windows guests
- Network: fixed issues with DOS guests
- Network: fixed creation of more than one host interface during process lifetime on Windows
- API: startup even when a VM configuration file is inaccessible or corrupted
- API: faster startup using lazy media access checking
- Linux Additions: fixed several installation issues and added better error checks
- Linux Additions: added support for X.org 7.1
- Installer: added packages for Ubuntu 6.10 (Edgy Eft), Ubuntu 6.06 LTS (Dapper Drake) and Debian 4.0 (Etch)

## 10.2. Version 1.2.4 (2006-11-16)

Several bug fixes that accidentally didn't make it into 1.2.2

## 10.3. Version 1.2.2 (2006-11-14)

Note: Guest Additions have to be updated for the enhanced VRDP features to work.

- Linux Additions: improved compatibility with Red Hat distributions
- Linux Additions: enhanced display performance, solved several issues
- Linux Additions: added color pointer support
- Linux Additions: added support for X.org 7.x
- VMM: fixed sporadic mouse reset problem
- VMM: fixed several issues with Linux guests



- VMM: significant performance improvements for Linux 2.6 guests
- VMM: significant general performance improvements
- VMM: fixed sporadic reboot problems (logo hang)
- VMM: added support for Intel VT-x (aka Vanderpool)
- VMM: experimental support for IBM OS/2 Warp (requires VT-x to be enabled)
- USB: added support for isochronous transfers (webcams, audio, etc.)
- USB: fixed problem with devices not showing up after a guest reboot
- USB: fixed several issues
- BIOS: fixed use of fourth boot device
- BIOS: added boot menu support
- BIOS: added support for disks up to 2 Terabytes
- VRDP: significantly enhanced performance and reduced bandwidth usage through new acceleration architecture
- VBoxManage: added support for capturing network traffic
- GUI: added fullscreen mode
- GUI: fixed several problems

## **10.4. Version 1.1.12 (2006-11-14)**

- Additions: enabled more display modes for X.org 7.x
- VMM: stability improvements
- VMM: resolved excessive performance degradation caused by Symantec Antivirus
- iSCSI: fixed memory corruption issue
- VBoxSDL: made hostkey configurable
- VRDP: report error in case binding to the port fails
- VRDP: added mouse wheel support
- NAT: significant performance improvements
- Network: stability fixes
- Network: significant performance improvements
- ACPI: improved host power status reporting
- PXE: added support for Microsoft RIS / ProxyDHCP
- PXE: fixed several issues, added diagnostic messages

## **10.5. Version 1.1.10 (2006-07-28)**

- IDE: added workaround for Acronis TrueImage (violates IDE specification)
- IDE: resolved issues with certain Linux guests
- ACPI: further improved host power status reporting
- API: fixed several race conditions and improved reliability
- API: increased maximum guest RAM size to 2GB (Linux host) and 1.2GB (Windows host)
- USB: added option to set the OHCI timer rate
- VMM: fixed several issues
- VRDP: fixed infinite resize loop
- GUI: changed the default host key to Right Control

## 10.6. Version 1.1.8 (2006-07-17)

- IDE: new ATA implementation with improved performance, reliability and better standards compliance
- IDE: added experimental support for ATAPI passthrough (to use CD/DVD burners inside VMs)
- VMM: fixed user mode IOPL handling (hwclock failure)
- VMM: fixed crashes upon termination in Linux X servers
- VMM: fixed problems with Knoppix 5.0 (and other Linux kernels 2.6.15+)
- VMM: improved handling of self modifying code (aka Linux 2.6.15+ errors)
- VMM: introduce release logging for better servability
- VMM: significant performance improvements, especially for Linux 2.6 guests
- VRDP: several issues have been fixed
- VRDP: fixed enhanced rdesktop to build correctly under Linux 2.6.15+
- Additions: added support for SUSE 10.1 and Fedora Core 5
- NAT: improved performance and stability
- NAT: handle host IP configuration changes at runtime
- VBoxManage: made VRDP authentication configurable
- VDI: added workaround against possible Windows host deadlocks caused by a synchronisation flaw in Windows
- ACPI: improved host power status reporting

## 10.7. Version 1.1.6 (2006-04-18)

- ACPI: added workaround for XP SP2 crash in intelppm.sys (the real problem is a bug in this driver)

- IDE: added support for image files of up to 8 terabytes
- API: fixed several race conditions on SMP systems
- Network: significant performance improvements
- VRDP: fixed several issues with USB redirection
- IDE: added workaround for Windows 2000 installation problems due to a bug in the Windows disk driver (see troubleshooting section)
- VRDP: provide extensive connection information (also exposed through VBoxManage)
- Linux module: added support for Linux 2.6.16
- VBoxManage: improved support for immutable disk images
- iSCSI: several fixes
- USB: several fixes
- VBoxSDL: added switch for fixed video mode and guest image centering
- VMM: improved performance of Linux 2.6.x guests

## 10.8. Version 1.1.4 (2006-03-09)

Note: The configuration file format has been changed. After applying this update, execute "VBoxManage updatesettings" to convert your configuration to the new format. Note: Guest Additions have to be updated.

- General: added support for multi-generation snapshots
- VMM: fixed Linux guest reboot regression
- VRDP: added client authentication through external authentication libraries (WinLogon and PAM interfaces are provided as sample code)
- VRDP: close TCP connection immediately when receiving bad data from the remote side
- VRDP: improved Microsoft RDP client support
- XPCOM: fixed race condition on SMP systems that could lead to hung client processes (Linux host)
- API: fixed race condition on SMP systems
- Network: added AMD PC-Net II 100MBit network card (Am79C973)
- Network: added PXE boot ROM for network boot
- Audio: fixed regression with Windows 2000 guests
- Audio: pause playback when VM is paused
- iSCSI: added standards compliant iSCSI initiator for transparent access of iSCSI targets
- VBoxSDL: ship on Windows as well
- VBoxManage: added command to clone a VDI file to another one having a different UUID
- Additions: added Linux additions (timesync, mouse pointer integration and graphics driver)

- Additions: added Shared Folders for Windows guests (except NT)
- Linux module: fixed compilation problem on SUSE 10 system
- Linux installer: added custom shell script installer

## 10.9. Version 1.1.2 (2006-02-03)

Note: Guest Additions have to be updated. The installation method has changed.

- BIOS: fixed CMOS checksum calculation (to avoid guest warnings)
- BIOS: improved APM support (to avoid guest warnings)
- IDE: Linux 2.6.14+ and OpenBSD now operate the controller in UDMA mode by default
- VMM: fixed hang when rebooting Windows 2000 guests with enabled audio adapter
- VMM: fixed random user mode crashes with OpenBSD guests
- VMM: increased timing accuracy (PIT, RTC), reduced PIT query overhead
- VMM: tamed execution thread to make GUI more responsive (esp. when executing real mode guest code such as bootloaders)
- VMM: significant performance enhancements for OpenBSD guests
- VMM: several performance enhancements
- VMM: improved memory layout on Windows hosts to allow for large amounts of guest RAM
- VMM: significantly improved VM execution state saving and restoring (at the expense of state file sizes)
- ACPI: fixed Windows bluescreen when assigning more than 512MB RAM to a guest
- ACPI: correctly report battery state when multiple batteries are present on the host (Linux hosts)
- ACPI: enabled by default for newly created VMs
- APIC: added optional I/O APIC
- Graphics: fixed distortion when changing guest color depth without changing the resolution
- VRDP: added support for remote USB (requires special rdesktop client)
- VRDP: added support for the Microsoft RDP client
- VRDP: improved audio support
- Floppy: controller can be disabled
- Floppy: fixed "no disk in drive" reporting
- Floppy: fixed writing to floppy images
- VBoxManage: restructured USB device filter syntax to make it more intuitive
- VBoxManage: added command for setting guest logon credentials
- Additions: added installer for Windows 2000/XP/2003 guests

- Additions: added custom GINA module which hooks MSGINA and can perform automatic logons using credentials retrieved from the VMM
- Documentation: added draft of VirtualBox user manual

## 10.10. Version 1.0.50 (2005-12-16)

Note: Guest Additions have to be updated

- VMM: added support for OpenBSD guests
- VMM: fixed a memory leak
- Network: added Internal Networking (to directly wire VMs without using host interfaces and making the traffic visible on the host)
- Network: fixed crash/hang at exit with TAP on Linux
- Graphics: added support for additional custom VESA modes
- Graphics: added support for VESA modes with y offset
- VRDP: added support for remote audio (PCM encoding)
- USB: fixed several potential crashes
- USB: fixed revision filter matching
- USB: fixed support for devices with integrated USB hubs

## 10.11. Version 1.0.48 (2005-11-23)

Note: The configuration has to be deleted as the format has changed. On Linux, issue `rm -rf ~/.VirtualBox`. On Windows, remove the directory `C:\Documents and Settings\<username>\.VirtualBox`. If you fail to do so, VirtualBox will not startup. Note: Guest Additions have to be updated

- VMM: fixed a Linux 2.6 guest panic on certain P4 CPUs
- VMM: performance improvements
- Graphics: fixed y offset handling in dynamic resolution mode (secure labeling support)
- VDI: added support for immutable independent images (part of the upcoming snapshot feature)
- Additions: added VBoxControl command line utility to get/set the guest video acceleration status
- Additions: video acceleration is turned off by default, use VBoxControl to enable it. It usually helps for VRDP performance.
- GUI: DirectDraw support for faster display handling on Win32.
- GUI: allow creation and assignment of disk images in the New VM wizard.
- USB: fixed high CPU load on certain Linux distributions
- VBoxSDL: fixed several secure labeling issues (crash at exit, protection against guest video modes greater than what SDL provides on the host)

- VBoxManage: convert command line parameters from the current codepage to Unicode

## 10.12. Version 1.0.46 (2005-11-04)

Note: Guest Additions have to be updated

- Linux: VirtualBox binaries can now be started from directories other than the installation directory
- VMM: added support for PAE guest mode
- VMM: added support for hosts running in NX (No Execute) / DEP (Data Execution Prevention) mode
- Graphics: fixes for dynamic resolution handling
- Linux module: yet another kernel panic fix due to weird patches in RedHat Enterprise Linux 4 Update 2
- VBoxSVC: if VBOX\_USER\_HOME is set, look for configuration in this directory (default: \$HOME/.VirtualBox)

## 10.13. Version 1.0.44 (2005-10-25)

Note: Guest Additions have to be updated.

- Installer: greatly improved Windows installer, fixed uninstall and perform driver and COM registration through MSI
- VBoxManage: added commands to create and delete Win32 Host Interface Networking adapters
- VDI: updated virtual disk image format (for newly created images; old images continue to work) with enhanced write performance and support for the upcoming snapshot feature
- Network: performance improvements
- Graphics: added hardware acceleration to virtual graphics adapter and corresponding Guest Additions driver
- Graphics/Additions/GUI: added dynamic resizing support
- Graphics: added workaround for buggy VESA support in Windows Vista/Longhorn
- VRDP: performance and stability improvements; added support for graphics acceleration architecture
- USB: restructured USB subsystem; added support for filters to autocapture devices that meet defined criteria
- GUI: added mouse wheel support
- VMM: added support for PAE host mode

## 10.14. Version 1.0.42 (2005-08-30)

Note: The configuration has to be deleted as the format has changed. On Linux, issue `rm -rf ~/.VirtualBox`. On Windows, remove the directory `C:\Documents and Set-`

tings\

- USB: added USB support for Windows hosts
- Network: renamed TUN to "Host Interface Networking" and TAP on Linux
- Network: added support for Host Interface Networking on Windows hosts
- Network: added "cable connected" property to the virtual network cards
- Floppy: added a virtual floppy drive to the VM and support for attaching floppy images and capturing host floppy drives
- DVD/CD: added host CD/DVD drive support
- BIOS: added boot order support
- Saved states: made location configurable (default, global setting, machine specific setting, including VBoxManage command support)
- VMM: added support for host CPUs without FXSR (e.g. Via Centaur)
- VMM: increased performance of Linux 2.6 guests
- VMM: improved timing
- VMM: fixed traps in XP guests with ACPI enabled
- VBoxManage: added remote session start function (tstHeadless has been removed from the distribution)
- VBoxManage: restructured commands, added numerous improvements
- GUI: propagate hostkey change to all running instances
- GUI: perform image access tests asynchronously
- GUI: added boot order support
- GUI: user interface redesign

## 10.15. Version 1.0.40 (2005-06-17)

Note: The configuration has to be deleted as the format has changed. On Linux, issue `rm -rf ~/.VirtualBox`. On Windows, remove the directory `C:\Documents and Settings\. If you fail to do so, VirtualBox will not startup. Note: Guest Additions have to be updated.`

- SDK: ship VirtualBox development tools and sample program
- BIOS: made startup logo animation configurable for OEM customers
- BIOS: fixed network card detection under DOS
- Graphics: fixed VESA modes in XP and XFree86/X.org
- Network: fixed Linux guest issues
- Network: fixed NAT DHCP server to work with MS-DOS TCP/IP
- Network: fixed performance issue under heavy guest CPU load

- Network: fixed errors with more than one network card
- USB: added experimental USB support for Linux hosts
- VMM: fixed DOS A20 gate handling in real mode
- VMM: fixed TSS IO bitmap handling (crash in Debian/Knoppix hardware detection routine)
- VMM: fixed IO issue which broke VESA in X11
- VMM: performance improvements for Linux guests
- VMM: added local APIC support
- VBoxSDL: added pointer shape support and use host pointer in fullscreen mode if available
- GUI: determine system parameters (e.g. maximum VDI size) using the API
- GUI: added detailed error information dialogs
- GUI: special handling of inaccessible media
- API: better error message handling, provide system parameters, handle inaccessible media
- Guest Additions: implemented full pointer shape support for all pointer color depths including alpha channel
- VBoxManage: several command extensions

## 10.16. Version 1.0.39 (2005-05-05)

Note: Guest Additions have to be updated.

- Linux: converted XPCOM runtime to a single shared object
- Linux: fixed SIGALRM process crash on certain distributions
- VMM: fixed Linux guests with grsecurity (address space scrambling)
- ACPI: added experimental ACPI support
- VRDP: added shadow buffer for reduced bandwidth usage
- VRDP: added support for pointer shapes and remote pointer cache
- GUI: added support for pointer shapes
- Windows Additions: added support for high resolution video modes, including multi screen modes (2, 3 and 4 screens)
- VBoxManage: added new command line tool to automate simple administration tasks without having to write application code

## 10.17. Version 1.0.38 (2005-04-27)

- GUI: fixed creation of disk images larger than 4GB
- GUI: added network and audio configuration panels



- GUI: several keyboard issues fixed
- VBoxSDL: fixed -tunfd handling and added -tundev (Linux host)
- IDE: significant performance improvements in DMA modes
- Video: VRAM size is now configurable (1MB - 128MB; default 4MB)
- VMM: fixed several crashes and hangs while installing certain builds of Windows 2000 and XP
- VMM: allow guests to have more than 512MB of RAM
- VMM: resolved compatibility issues with SMP systems (Windows Host)
- VRDP: process cleanup on Linux fixed
- Linux module: fixed build error on Red Hat 2.4.21-15-EL
- NT Additions: fixed installation and a trap
- Win2k/XP Additions: fixed installation

## **10.18. Version 1.0.37 (2005-04-12)**

Initial build with changelog.

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# Glossary

## A

ACPI	Advanced Configuration and Power Interface, an industry specification for BIOS and hardware extensions to configure PC hardware and perform power management. Windows 2000 and higher as well as Linux 2.4 and higher support ACPI. Windows can only enable or disable ACPI support at installation time.
API	Application Programming Interface.
APIC	Advanced Programmable Interrupt Controller, a newer version of the original PC PIC (programmable interrupt controller). Most modern CPUs contain an on-chip APIC ("local APIC"). Many systems also contain an I/O APIC (input output APIC) as a sperate chip which provides more than 16 IRQs. Windows 2000 and higher use a different kernel if they detect an I/O APIC during installation. Therefore an I/O APIC must not be removed after installation.

## C

COM	Microsoft Component Object Model, a programming infrastructure for modular software. COM allows applications to provide application programming interfaces which can be accessed from various other programming languages and applications. Virtual-Box makes use of COM both internally and externally to provide a comprehensive API to 3rd party developers.
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## D

DHCP	Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol. This allows a network-ing device in a network to acquire its IP address (and other net-working details) automatically, in order to avoid having to con-figure all devices in a network with fixed IP addresses. Virtual-Box has a built-in DHCP server that delivers an IP addresses to a virtual machine when networking is configured to NAT; see Section 5.3, "Networking in virtual machines".
------	---

## G

GUI	Graphical User Interface. Commonly used as an antonym to a "command line interface", in the context of VirtualBox, we sometimes refer to the main graphical VirtualBox program as the "GUI", to differentiate it from the VBoxManage interface.
GUID	See UUID.

## I

I/O APIC	See APIC.
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iSCSI Internet SCSI; see Section 5.2.2, “iSCSI servers”.

## M

MAC Media Access Control, a part of an Ethernet network card. A MAC address is a 6-byte number which identifies a network card. It is typically written in hexadecimal notation where the bytes are separated as colons, such as 00:17:3A:5E:CB:08.

## N

NAT Network Address Translation. A technique to share networking interfaces by which an interface modifies the source and/or target IP addresses of networking packages according to specific rules. Commonly employed by routers and firewalls to shield an internal network from the Internet, VirtualBox can use NAT to easily share a host's physical networking hardware with its virtual machines. See Section 5.3, “Networking in virtual machines”.

## P

PIC See APIC.

PXE Preboot Execution Environment, an industry standard for booting PC systems from remote network locations. It includes DHCP for IP configuration and TFTP for file transfer. Using UNDI, a hardware independent driver stack for accessing the network card from bootstrap code is available.

## R

RDP Remote Desktop Protocol, a protocol developed by Microsoft as an extension to the ITU T.128 and T.124 video conferencing protocol. With RDP, a PC system can be controlled from a remote location using a network connection over which data is transferred in both directions. Typically graphics updates and audio are sent from the remote machine and keyboard and mouse input events are sent from the client. VirtualBox contains an enhanced implementation of the relevant standards called “VirtualBox RDP” (VRDP), which is largely compatible with Microsoft's RDP implementation. See Section 5.5, “Remote Desktop Support (VRDP)” for details.

## S

SCSI Small Computer System Interface. An industry standard for data transfer between devices, especially for storage. See Section 5.2.2, “iSCSI servers”.

## U

**UUID** A Universally Unique Identifier -- often also called GUID (Globally Unique Identifier) -- is a string of numbers and letters which can be computed dynamically and is guaranteed to be unique. Generally, it used as a global handle to identify entities. VirtualBox makes use of UUIDs to identify VMs, Virtual Disk Images (VDI files) and other entities.

## **V**

**VM** Virtual Machine -- a virtual computer that VirtualBox allows you to run on top of your actual hardware. See Section 1.1, “Virtualization basics” for details.

**VRDP** See RDP.

## **X**

**XPCOM** Mozilla Cross Platform Component Object Model, a programming infrastructure developed by the Mozilla browser project which is similar to Microsoft COM and allows applications to provide a modular programming interface. VirtualBox makes use of XPCOM on Linux both internally and externally to provide a comprehensive API to third-party developers.